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THE DYNAMITE CARTRIDGE.

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THE

DYNAMITE CARTRIDGE.

BY

MRS. FRANCES GRANT TEETZEL.

"Suum cuique."

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1885.

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1885.

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DEDICATION.

THIS "short and simple annal" is lovingly dedicated to my dear son Harry, whose views on the subject of dedication exactly coincide with my own.

THE AUTHOR.

JANUARY 21, 1885.

CONTENTS.

PAGE.

CHAPTER I 1

CHAPTER II 6

CHAPTER III — The Snow Plow 10

CHAPTER IV — Cousin "Tildy" and Lemuel her Husband 17

CHAPTER V — The Arrival 23

CHAPTER VI — In the Morning 31

CHAPTER VII — Dinner! 39

CHAPTER VIII 48

CHAPTER IX — A Mystery 55

CHAPTER X — Amos Early as an Office-Seeker . . . 60

CHAPTER XI — Waiting 65

CHAPTER XII 72

CHAPTER XIII — Why Absence on the part of Gabriel Strong? 75

CHAPTER XIV — The Dynamite Cartridge 82

CHAPTER XV — Peter Heinze 95

CONCLUSION 99

THE DYNAMITE CARTRIDGE.

CHAPTER I.

"GOTTLIEB, Gottlieb!" the call proceeded from old Amos Early, as he stood by the kitchen door of his large farm-house, one cold day late in the fall, and held fast the bridle of his frisky little mare Zep.

When the call was again repeated, and again, the door opened and through the space thus made, out came the gray head of his wife.

"Can't y' make 'em hear ye, father?" said the woman who clipped and accented her words as careless western people, who know better, very often thus deflect from the beauty of their mother tongue.

"It's high time for all the boys to be up to dinner," she added.

"So 'tis," said her husband. "Still," remarked his wife, "I don't see why that boy ain't here to do the chores."

After Samuel her youngest son had explained to his good mother the meaning of "Gottlieb," she understood it as part and parcel of what she considered as foreign profanity. Ever since, she evaded its use and, instead

of this name so objectionable, said "that boy" when speaking of the hired man's new assistant.

"If it wasn't fur my stiff knee," said Amos, "I'd go down the hill myself and water the mare — here he is, now," he said as he saw Gottlieb come up the path at an unusually slow gait. As one formed of wood the boy gathered up the reins and let the horse take her own way down the easy slope of the hill to the river.

"If any one always does things upside down it's Gottlieb," said Amos to his wife, who had now opened wide her door and stood there on the stoop while the kitchen cooled off before dinner.

Mrs. Amos had chronic catarrh and a troublesome cough, yet never did it occur to her to charge them to going bareheaded out into the cold.

Down the hill went Gottlieb because the mare did; as he let her wade into the water to drink, he let go the lines, and planted himself in vacant stare on the river bank. Gazing out into space, he presented a most ludicrous spectacle. His eyes were white, shallow and wide; his neck was long, and his blue shirt baggy about the waist; his trowsers were in welts and folds, held up in that condition by the tight legs of the boots he wore outside of them; his feet were broad, of vast extent. When one took note of the various features of his round face, not neglecting at the same time the flaring ears, and the shock of hair like corn silk in hue, one could well be excused for gazing at the simple fellow as a new and very comical study in human nature.

Zep drank her fill. On the opposite bank of the river she saw a particularly tempting bit of grass. In

a fine splash she waded to the other side, where high and dry she shook her head as one who laughs in new pleasure.

The light plash in the water attracted the wandering attention of Gottlieb.

"Coom vonce!" said he, holding out his crazy old felt hat.

As the river was very cold, as it was slightly swollen by a late rain, as it must of necessity be over the tops of his boots, and as, moreover, he had a dislike to that innocent fluid he never desired to conquer, the rage of the lazy boy knew no bounds. What he said in German and English, and all at once, and both together, and finally ended in a prolonged expletive, shall be left to the imagination better equipped to reproduce the scene than pen and paper, not to mention the lacking coloring of words in themselves.

"Ach!" said he, looking over the muddy stream, as the horse pranced in great glee, and flew over the meadow.

Away went Zep; away after her the boy. It was a wild chase over many an icy rivulet and slippery hillock before she surrendered in a distant corner of the meadow.

Mounted upon her back, the need of exertion gone, Gottlieb allowed no efforts of his own to hasten her progress over the rough stony ground, and down the bank into the river, and so splash, splash, to his first stopping-place.

Zep sure now to go on up the hill, the boy slid off behind, took up the wet lines from the ground to

escape any scolding for allowing them to drag—so would he drive the mare back to the barn. By this time Ford, Sax, Walt and Sam, the four sons of farmer Amos, together with the hired man, Tise, had come up from the field to dinner.

They were standing by the corner of the house.

The sight of "that boy" dragging himself far behind Zep, holding her in by the reins, was too suggestive of fun to be ignored. Crawford, or Ford, saluted Gottlieb with a grin, saying, "Get up, Zep," in a quick, sharp voice Zep never was known to disobey.

Off on a trot she started.

Gottlieb would not drop the lines so wet to be soiled in the road. Very probably visions of oats in the barn, with corn as a side dish and hay as dessert, were before the lively mare, for faster and more furious she ran like the "gray mare Meg," and the boy wonderfully shaken out of his slow ways hard on behind her.

Like a new variety of silhouette he jumped in great strides, one leg straight out before, the other straight out in a stiff line behind, as it looked to the boys who regarded the sight with shouts of laughter.

"Now," exclaimed a voice from the kitchen, "you boys ought to be ashamed of yourselves; come along into dinner, the whole o' you!" Amos led the way; he took his seat at the middle of the table, but awkwardly, on account of his stiff knee.

The four boys, Crawford, tall and slim and fair; Saxton, a new edition of his mother, brisk in manner and speech; Walter, a taciturn youth, and Samuel, a sharp-eyed boy of seventeen mischievous years, together with

Tise the "hired man," scrambled into their places at one end of the table.

Three daughters, Betsy, Maria and Susan, supported the left; while their mother faced her husband from the opposite side of the table.

There was momentary silence for the blessing; then came the work of waiting on the table.

"Did you see him run?" said Sam as he put down his well-filled plate before him. Thereupon ensued another outburst of laughter, joined in by Gottlieb himself, who now came into his place by Aunt Early at the right side of the table. He was red and panting, and grinned at the boys as he attacked the food on his plate with the ardor of a hungry boy.

CHAPTER II.

WHILE young and old make a business of their dinner we may say of the boys that they were fine, healthy country lads who every day worked with their father on the farm, and what "fun" they might add to their robust, steady lives, they welcomed as boys will welcome.

Tise, the hired man, was an Irishman, a good worker, shiftless, no thrift in him, as his pauper ancestors had been before him.

The three girls were strong, well able to help their active mother in the work of a house.

Useful girls were they if of no beauty to speak of. Pale eyes, light brown hair cut across the forehead in frantic bangs, like anything else than the artistic effect of this style in the make-up of a bewitching belle. Betsy and Maria were blessed with round faces. Betsy's face was of the brightest in its expression; eyes quick to see and a firm mouth, whose mild lines did not prevent incisive words to escape if there were need. Susan had a long face like her father; but fuller eyes, with a downward droop to the forehead, told something of intellect, and the delicate mouth bespoke innate refinement for its possessor. To say that either of the three girls were ordinary rustic

maidens would be wide of the truth, for, if somewhat homespun in their ways, they were clever in every womanly accomplishment, and at the village high school were the most thorough of any girls among the substantial farmers' daughters. Good, wholesome girls to be in the house with, whose very plainness, joined to their neat ways, made the very thought of their being beautiful and confined to heavy farm work entirely objectionable, even *as* a thought.

Dressed in calico to-day they were ready for any duty. The expectation of what amusements came day by day gave them cheerful thoughts to attack dull tasks and heavy. For example, it was delightful to go to the reading club; picnics as they were managed in this community were charming (in the abstract). Dancing parties were charming, too, and church festivals and oyster suppers.

Susan, perhaps, was the scholar of the family. The common algebra and geometry of her sisters she had supplemented by sundry studies in language and art. To be sure her "French" was peculiar, yet it gave her culture. If the French word for sister she pronounced as "suur," and read "bong" and "monsuur," it was hardly her fault, and far be it from one to imply that such lapses of pronunciation should provoke a smile. She sang, "When the stars shine from heaven afar," a fine song with an amazing accompaniment, which she must needs play out of time, and when she sang in a nasal voice, generally sharp in its high notes which it was her habit to attack fortissimo, the general effect of this musical performance was to make her teacher

doubt seriously if singing was all it was represented to be. But in spite of "coughs and of frowns" Susan would sing "When the stars shine" — distracting all ears by her "ups and her downs."

Taken as an indication of an earth-bound human soul reaching out for something better, her "French" and "Music" were pathetic if, in fact, there were not a trace of nobility in it all. Who should deny that she was on the right road? But when she read to her club, in a poor voice, French selections from her class book neither herself nor her hearers understood, — in an accent to drive Monsieur wild; and when, time after time, she sang, "When the stars" for every public occasion that offered, she was on the wrong road. The only fact to destroy its evil tendency was that she was wanting in vanity, or self-assertion, hence Susan was safe.

Aside from, on general principles, being the most interesting member of the family as its "scholar," at this time she was of added importance, for Gabriel Strong, of the Strong Stone Quarries, was supposed to be paying her his addresses. This was mutually agreeable to all concerned, so why should not the course of true love for once run smooth? Alas! How "trifles light as air" take to themselves wondrous importance as they add their weight to the woe of lovers true.

Amos Early, her father, partook more of the nature of his daughter Betsy than of Susan. He was a simple farmer whose stiff knee had grown from rheumatism contracted in the army. He was a slight, wiry man, rough in skin, grizzly hair and beard. His eyes were

brown, with a good expression, and his long nose and firm mouth denoted energy of character, if at the same time neither in face nor manner was there a trace of ill temper about the man.

The newspapers he read as indefatigably as a London cockney, which produced a strange effect upon his mental habits. He was bewildered with conflicting conclusions in all his subjects of thought; like Betsy he had a sharp tongue: hence he was not comfortable to talk with; for, choose which side of a question one might, Amos could be depended upon to adhere to the other side and to quote disagreeable figures and "facts" of the opposition, until no joy was left in the conversation. His wife, a quickly-moving, nervous little body, listened to all the rest, read her daily lesson in the Bible, believed it all word for word, and letter for letter, and on occasion sympathized with all the world. At this date the pranks of her lawless sons on the new boy, if hugely enjoyed upon the whole by the boy himself, seemed serious enough to her. This gave the greater zest to their jokes, and she was often heard to declare that their father was the worst one of the lot, in that he encouraged their folly by laughing at it.

In a word, while the work on Amos Early's farm was no more nor less than on the farms of other men, the spirit of good nature going with it all, and the mental stimulus of degrees of intellectual labor and its peace and plenty, made it the place of contentment to which many a discouraged wayfarer might turn with the joy of a pilgrim to his shrine.

CHAPTER III.

THE SNOW PLOW.

"Oh, yes;" said Crawford, "here's a letter for y'— got it down t' th' office just now."

He had been to market in the village and had stopped for mail.

"You don't say so," said his mother, extending her bony hand for the letter. He drew it out of a side pocket and gave it to her.

"It's from town," he said; "guess it's Lem Gibbin's writing, it looks like it."

As his good mother had the tea poured, she arranged her glasses to read; soon the few facts set forth by the round, regular, well-shaded letters were mastered. She was prepared to give them to the rest. "Now, pa, this is first rate," she exclaimed; "Lem's coming out for a two week's vacation with Tildy and little Ned; here's what he says:

"'Dear aunt:—

If agreeable to yourself, and if we shall not be in the way, we hope to come out Wednesday to spend my dull-time vacation. Matilda is poorly, so that it will be more to her than enjoyment to be in your beautiful country. I should vastly enjoy the change. In haste, as it's the hour of noon and I've yet to eat my luncheon.

Yours, with love to all,

Lemuel Gibbon.'"

The old lady read it with evident delight.

"How good that is," said she, carefully refolding her letter in a pride and care full of reproof to those who read at a glance and toss into the waste-paper basket.

"I'll tell you what," said she, "we must git right about them turkeys, so's to finish in time, an' Wednesday when y' take th' load in, stop an' bring 'em out. Tildy's sickly any way, an' a holiday will do 'em all good."

"Then Lem will be here for Thanksgiving," said Sam. "Pa, you 'n him can tell war stories till we can't rest."

"Oh, I dunno," said his father, "Lem's a good talker — guess we'll let him do the talking."

"Ef he kin beat you atalkin', Amos," said his wife, "he'll have to be a smarter Englishman than ever he was yit."

"I like to hear him talk of London and the Queen," said Susan.

"Lem's a good fellow," said Sam. "How'd he happen t' go into the army, pa?" Sam continued.

"Well, he was just over from the old country with a box full of clothes an' a lot o' money — 's much as two hundred dollars, ef a cent. He was a young feller, an' instid of goin' t' work he enlisted. After the war it took 'im a year to sober up and cure his dyspepsy and rheumatiz; even then he wasn't no ways fit for what y'd call right down hard work, but he found a place to keep books, and has been at it ever sense."

"Must be a stupid, dull kind of a life," said Betsy.

"Seems to me I should like to live in the city," her

sister Maria remarked as one who studies a question. Various comments followed as each in turn found something to say, and the gist of all said was that Lemuel Gibbon, and Tildy his wife, and his only son Ned, would not only be well received but very welcome to the farm-house of Amos Early.

The boy Gottlieb had finished his dinner and was now ready for work.

"Gottlieb," said Ford, "we'd better get in the rest of that corn this afternoon. It may snow. You fetch out the horse 's quick 's y' kin."

Ford could speak pure English when he took the trouble.

Gottlieb shoved away from the table, and grinning back to Sam who winked at him with an accompanying grimace, sufficient to make any boy laugh, faced the back door and shuffled out of the kitchen.

Said Mrs. Early as the others lingered a moment to finish their pumpkin pie and their last cup of tea so delicious with white sugar and yellow cream (whereof Gottlieb had had two sections of the one and three steaming cups of the other), "To-morrow," she remarked, "we'll finish the rest of the turkeys, so I'll want all the help I can git."

"How many hev y' this time?" asked her husband.

"One hundred as pretty young ones as I ever see in my life," said she proudly.

"Then," quoth Amos, "if Lem wasn't comin' out, we'd leave one for them, but they'll hev all they want here."

"That's so," said his wife.

So the "menfolks" in a bustle and "clatter," as Maria used to say speaking of the boys and their ways, went out to their field of corn.

Many hands put the kitchen in order and ironed the clothes that had been washed that morning and which the wind had dried.

This was to get the housework "done up out of the way" to be free at the end of the week when they would visit with cousin "Tildy."

In the preparation of the Thanksgiving turkeys, and ducks, and geese, and chickens for market, Aunt Early kept up her reputation for excellence. All were singed and sewed, tied up by the legs ready to hang up. They were glad every season when this disagreeable business was over and the load was well on its way to the city. But if, in the distant town, the lucky ones who chanced to get one of Aunt Early's turkeys did not have an especial thanksgiving, and long in their hearts to go and reward the old lady for her faithful work, it was because they did not deserve such good fortune.

The wind was south-east, and that night a light snow-storm, to be followed by wind shifting into the opposite point of the compass, told of arctic weather to come.

The first thought that sprung up in the mind of Tise as he gazed out over the snowy waste early Wednesday morning was one of rejoicing that now had come an opportunity to use the new snow-plow he had made the latter days of the preceding March—as it happened, too late for a heavy snow-storm, or any snow storm, to call

it into active service. With great alacrity he called Gottlieb, hitched up Zep, and prepared for business.

Usually work in common between Tise and Gottlieb could be depended upon to arouse some race antipathy, some revival of ancient ill will between Saxon and Celt. Tise, for example, had no strong love for taking hold of anything to be done, when he could by any means evade it; Gottlieb, like many another great mind, was stupendously slow in bringing his faculties to bear upon a subject, and to arouse him to the point of manual activity was in the nature of other feats of human genius. Often would Ford, or Sam, call and wait in vain vexation for the boy to do some trifling labor, and then do it themselves long before Gottlieb would be seen coming along serenely smiling. Hence it was, then, that Tise, being endowed with a hot Irish temper, when he had to do with Gottlieb, who had a German temper, began and ended in a war of words characteristic of the Irish nature, accompanied by words equal in warmth and effusiveness inspired by the German nature of the boy.

Upon this snowy morning, when the light of day was yet below the horizon, there were potent reasons why any conflict between Tise and Gottlieb was out of the question.

There was Zep with a sleigh bell or two in her harness, and Tise looked bland, smiling in the uncertain light; and best of it was, the sharp snow-plow, the first Gottlieb had ever seen; nay, never in the winter of his distasteful snow shoveling had he dreamed that there could be anything so easy. The grin over his face fully equalled the grin over the face of the other.

When farmer Early, on his soft, warm pillow, heard the tinkling of bells, he thought he had a pleasant dream, and smiled in his drowsy half awakening. When Ford, also half asleep, heard the bells, he thought it must be snowing, and wondered if "she" would go with him for a ride in the evening.

In solid comfort our duo cleared beautiful paths all over the premises where paths could be made serviceable.

The word to describe the period of time thus consumed would probably be "twinkling." Then it was at the expense of so little labor, for on the seat both sat side by side. It was too enjoyable; but so soon at an end.

"Sammy must go to school," suggested Gottlieb.

"I'll make a road for him," said Tise, turning Zep's head to the road.

Soon finished.

"Miss Amos," said Gottlieb, copying the village style of designating that lady, "she will go to church sometimes," he concluded.

"Let's plow a good path for her; a fine one, bedad!" said Tise.

So he did.

"I say, Gottlieb," said Tise, "don't you have to go to singing school to-night?"

"Iss dees Friday?" asked Gottlieb doubtfully.

"It ought to be," said Tise informally.

"Woll den, make mich ein roat, auch," said the boy.

Very good; up to the Lutheran church they went;

thence to the butcher shop; also to the post-office, and so three miles up the hill-road back home, both elated at such an amount of work done without exertion — as Tise said, "fust rate," every road scraped bare and clean. It was hard on Zep, but, "Begorra! fwhat's a horse for, shure!" quoth Tise.

Ford said afterwards that he knew at breakfast those two had been in some sort of a scrape, or they wouldn't have come in from the barn so brisk; no, sir! When through the day the towns-people stopped in to express their feelings, almost too strong for words, Tise's employers found it no "easy" matter to sympathize as the case demanded.

"To think that good neighbors should go and rig up a snow-plow, and take the middle line through every narrow, ditch-edged road in the country about, it was too bad; and the first snow, too!"

CHAPTER IV.

COUSIN "TILDY" AND LEMUEL HER HUSBAND.

If twenty years before, at the end of the war, any prophet had told Lemuel Gibbon that the same dull street, the same darksome alley, the same smoke-grimed window, the same tall stool, the same old chipped and scratched desk, and the same young old man before it, working, slaving each day, from seven in the morning until any hour at night, when his books were in shape for the day to follow,—if any prophet had said, "This, my man, is to be your fortune and lot in the world," would Lemuel Gibbon have turned his back upon what was unwelcome, as words of Daniel, or Jeremiah, and set himself to associate with one whose speech was more in accord with the natural ambition of a young man's heart? What! Lemuel Gibbon, full of the restless spirit of the camp, its turmoil, its excitement, its desire for battle and its love of glory!

He was a stranger, an alien soldier; but how brave, how fearless! What, then?—a stranger, friendless, no influence,—for all save the doing he might have dug in the ditch and kept to his shelter, save for the very love of the doing. Was his soul brave and steadfast to

stand him in good support through this later life? Was this all? Had he naught to hope for?

Here he was at his desk, then; assistant book-keeper in the heavy wholesale house of Teller, Stoltz and Company. Rather tall than short, thin, and at this time a stoop in his walk that daily exercise did not prevent. Iron gray hair, closely cut, and the bald spot on his crown grew no smaller. His blue eyes were lifeless, cold in expression, as if calloused by constantly coming in contact with endless rows of figures. His forehead was broad and good, so were the well-defined eyebrows, his nose aquiline, cheeks thin, an upper lip not too broad for the square chin; his mouth, although formed in a classic curve, was devoid of the lines of smiles from many a pleasing trifle. Unconsciously to the possessor, it had grown into the very image of the hard lips of Mr. Teller. Over the face, as a mask, was the look of dogged endurance born from the soldier spirit of "fighting it out on that line," and with a firm front passing through the harshness of Mr. Stoltz without mortal injury to pride and self-respect.

One might imagine that Lemuel was surly and cross as a companion, and for many a year the last desire of a sane person for an intimate friend.

His home was three or four miles from his desk; it was ugly, too; abominably ugly. It cost him twenty dollars a month out of the fifty dollars he had in all; ten of the remainder must go for coal and wood. If the summer's saving in this item had not helped him out, he would have been in a sad way with all he had to do with his money. Neat he always was, if shabby.

But neat or otherwise, it was naught to his masters, if only the books were rightly balanced.

Masters?

Verily, in the strictest sense of the word; and for him was no hope of demagogue taking him to help grind some political axe, because he was nothing—not worth a thought, much less a word. Were there not throngs like him? If he left his desk, were there not scores eager to step into so good a place?—a place in the great house of Teller, Stoltz & Co. Yes, indeed.

Society needed him not; society thought less of him than of the nameless infant abandoned to perish in the "horrible street."

And day by day he plodded and toiled.

When Mrs. Lemuel Gibbon had completed the various requirements of her poverty-stricken household it left her strength or mind for nothing farther by way of exertion, and many a light-footed, active woman had done this better.

Going along in one rut for so many years had been wearing upon her; its effect worse than for her husband. He was strong and dogged, she was weak; he had the spirit to endure, she had become hopeless and despondent; even to the last degree of weeping bitter tears of absolute wretchedness, if she did not complain. What good would that do? Her life and its environment she thought of with detestation. The load was heavy for her weak nature; if beneath it she tottered and well nigh had dropped, the suffering was all her own. Friends she had none. Church none. The people about her in manners and daily walk and

conversation a step above the slums, with untidy dress and clacking voices talking interminably, were worse than no society for her as poor as they. Her one comfort was her delicate boy, and there was a pang in that when she saw that he was like herself, a character poorly adapted to fight his way through the world.

Sundays and holidays brought no respite, for these days Lemuel was irritable and unstrung from the nervous "winding up," as he said, that carried him through seasons of labor at the store. Ill-tempered, ungracious, churlish, cross about the scanty cookery, sour and peevish about the expenses, silent of an evening.

The poor woman never had a chance to tell out the thoughts unutterable of her full heart to any in this world. As to saying them in prayer, she "knew" the skies were closed to her, miserable. That she (working so faithfully, dear saint!) was sinful, a miserable sinner, the theology she had learned convinced her beyond a doubt.

The single "amusement" that came to her happened Sundays, when after dinner with Lemuel and little Ned she was carried off to a cheap resort, by means of an unclean, cold, over-crowded street car. The noise and jam of the flashy "hall" were detestable to her; likewise, the broad farce and the dramatic outrageousness which seemed to her to come from straying spirits, dancing, mocking upon the borders of an abyss.

Often in the summer her husband would go to a base ball match, and this, to her gentle nature, was too wrong, too wicked to endure, as any other crime, lying,

stealing, or any evil one might name, was disgraceful and to be avoided.

The ultimate effect of the years that had gone was a morbid melancholy; feeble battling in the dust-hidden arena of our nineteenth century coliseum had left their traces "on heart and brain." Did she long to be at rest? Did the thought often come to her as the long sleepless nights wore on that one sharp, tiny cut, a few painless gasps and all would be over? Who would weep to find her still? There was fascination in the picture of relief. In her lonely hours she dwelt upon it more than was profitable for the health of a well-balanced mind.

Alas! that God's own little ones toil along in wretchedness, like the unhappy wife of Lemuel Gibbon.

These miserables all look alike, but when the naturalist studies them by individual specimens of the species, there are to be found distinctive traits. Is there any scientist so profound that, like the Devonian fossils, he has been able to give these obscure types their place in the "Continuity of Life?"

As a matter of private opinion it has been plainly expressed that these people go to prove in the first place that the theory of Evolution is unsatisfactory; and again, if we take the class as it stands, the theory is false; for here they were created by the social law of our two or three centuries of civilization, and just here they stop short off, like a *cul de sac.*

And let no Evolutionist, carried away by love of science, endeavor by Lemuel to prove the ultimate truth of the theory, for one exception to countless

examples of the normal state of a species does not go to *prove* anything. Yet, again, Lemuel's exceptional history will be taken up by the delvers in social science to prove both the truth of Evolution and the beginning of a New Era from this isolated example.

* * * * * *

But here is Lemuel's wife, making her few scanty preparations to visit in the country. That she was as tall as her husband one could see at a glance. Much toil and constant walking had given her hands with rough joints, and large feet. A form broad and flat, a long neck, a face gathering no fine expression from a bright soul within; a wide forehead, traces of pain in its slight frown; sunken black eyes, a handsome nose, straight, with delicate nostrils; a sad mouth, with the lips in a horizontal line, and a chin not unbeautiful, if somewhat square; in its center a dimple time had not hurt, and no color in a complexion always white and clear. With a shadow of a chance the face might have been really a model of quiet loveliness. But there are so many faces of the same type.

CHAPTER V.

THE ARRIVAL.

It was fully dark Wednesday evening before Amos Early's wife and daughters in waiting heard the music of the sleigh-bells.

While the girls, Betsy, Maria and Susan, flew to open the kitchen door, their mother took a last look at the tea-table loaded with the best supper she could set forth, before she hastened to make the tea.

Tise came promptly to take the team down to the barn, Gottlieb was milking, Crawford, Sax, Walt and Sam, who had been brushing up in expectation of the arrival, came tramp, tramping down the back stairs as their father in a glow of hospitality led the way into the warm kitchen from the cold stoop, followed by Lemuel, Tildy, Little Ned and the three girls who had welcomed their cousins outside.

Bags and boxes were deposited in a corner to be out of the way for the moment.

"Well, Aunt Early," said Lemuel, as he grasped the hard hand of his kind aunt, "here we are again;" the care of his daily life vanished, and he laughed a jolly laugh, as one who has wandered in deserts and who has come home.

"Yes," said his aunt, who had given her niece a first hug and was now ready for her niece's husband, "and now that you 're here, I'll just try and keep y' till I see more color in both o' your faces. I've my own opinion o' that place, any way, and I don't like to see you there. She referred to the city which she abhorred. Her sharp glance took in Tildy's thin gloves and his care-worn face.

He said with an involuntary sigh, "We have to make our living, — business is business."

"Yes," she assented, with both his hands in her own for added emphasis, "an' facts is facts: I've been oneasy about y' for a long time. I'd say to m'self, 'I must git in an' see Tildy,' but some how I couldn't git around to it. She's alookin' awful peekid."

"Hallo, Lem!" said his long, thin cousin Samuel, pulling him about by the shoulders.

Two strong hands met in a mighty grip. (Probably in a case of that sort while both parties undergo the torture, both are too proud to admit it, or show it.)

"Sam," said his cousin, "you are growing up, by Jove!"

"That's as sure as you live," said Sam's mother with pride in her voice, and through the noise of all moving about and talking at once. She held Tildy's hat and waited for her to take off her cloak, while Susan took little Ned's wrappings in the same good spirit of welcome.

"I've a job for you, Lem," continued Sam as Lemuel hung up his own coat and hat, and threw an arm over his shoulder. Amos, already by the fire, had his pipe

to stand between himself and starvation while he awaited the pleasure of the rest.

"Don't you want to come and look at my specimens?" said Sam. "I want you to label 'em for me."

"Certainly, Sam," began his cousin.

"See here, Sam Early," exclaimed Betsy, "you and your cabinet can wait. Let him alone till he gits into the house, can't you?"

"Come, come!" said Amos, "I'm as hungry as a bear. Let's have supper."

"Of course we will, Amos," said his wife, and in the bustle of the other boys welcoming the cousins, and in all getting around the table, individual words were lost, saving and excepting that Lemuel assured Sammy that he would put his cabinet in good shape for him.

Lemuel was not selfish. While the supper went on and all were talking, he, now that he was cared for and comfortable, allowed his eyes to take good note of his wife's face. It was the first time in years, so much had she become a matter of course in what was all so forlorn and wanting in any redeeming joy or pleasure. Had he suffered? What of her? He must needs quickly turn his thoughts from the hopeless, enduring unhappiness of that face; for an instant he shut his eyes, and at once banished for the time everything but the comfort of being one in this scene of light, warmth, plenty and mutual love.

Uncle Amos asked questions and answered them; at the same time doing with enthusiasm his duty as host.

Aunt Early equally as well discharged her part as hostess, keeping watch upon the plate of "that boy" to see that it was well filled; and for quite other reasons, a sharp eye on Sam, to see that he had no chance for any of his pranks that night.

Susan, as a general thing, came in for her mother's *care*, but to-night Sam and Susan were safe from each other, and Gottlieb was safe from Sam. Aunt Early almost wished Lem could arrive every day.

What a world of all sorts of news and events to talk over; old time friends and neighbors of Tildy, and a word for the old soldier life, and several words for Sammy's school with its "splendid" teacher, a glance at the church with its pastor, who was just the mildest man; "but, sir, he is deep, too, a fine scholar, ought to have heerd 'im Sunday. Best sermon I ever knew any one to preach in our church,—an hour long,—but he put as much into it as some would in two hours. It was about 'God's judgments on the disobedient.'"

"And he is eloquent, too," quoth Susan.

"But come," says Aunt Early, "now you all go into the other room."

Tise and Gottlieb had already taken their way to the barn to lock up for the night.

The daughters of the house were about to expostulate against leaving the work for their mother, but she gave them no time.

"Go in an' visit," she said, "I'll have 'that boy' help with the dishes. After that, there's nothing more to do to-night."

"Do you let Uncle Amos smoke yet?" said Lemuel, with his pipe and tobacco-bag in his hand and glancing over to the clock-shelf.

Uncle Amos answered that question for himself by turning his smiling face from his wife to the clock and his old arm-chair from the table, the better to rise from it and get the pipe and tobacco laid on one extremity of the shelf, as if to support the camphor bottle on the other.

"Don't stay out here three hours," advised Betsy, as she gazed significantly at the pipes.

"Ma, you'd better let me help you," said Maria, whose round face was dutifully bent to a careful gathering up of the knives.

But a chorus of voices leaving the room and a shake of her mother's head decided her to follow.

The two men drew near the cook-stove and with exact care scraped out their old black—I should have said, their beautiful brown—pipes, filled them to a requisite degree of compactness, burnt off the brimstone from a match, and then lighted up in a famous style, and were soon in that state of exquisite bliss known only to smokers.

Aunt Early set aside a pan or so from her work-table and talked with the tranquil smokers at intervals, as if waiting for something. At last she said, "I do wonder where 'that boy' can be."

He was always slow and Amos was so cosy he dreaded to go out after his pipe drew so perfectly, and a fine cloud was forming like a halo about his head.

"I verily believe," said the good woman, turning back

the cuffs of her black cashmere gown, "that I hear him up-stairs now. Call 'im, can't ye, pa?"

She did not allow her conscientious scruples concerning swear words to stand too strongly in the way of allowing another to use them for her in a case of necessity like the present; but then pa didn't think as she did any way, so it might not be wicked for him.

"Gottlieb! oh, Gottlieb!" called Amos.

The boy must have been ready to come, for, after a shuffle on the dark stairs he pushed open the door and stepped into the kitchen. His fair complexion, generally invisible, was now pink and shining; his short, broad form was draped in a Prince Albert coat of some blue color; about his neck was tightly wound, three or four times, a red woollen scarf, and on his head was a cap of shaggy fur, whose sole merit was that it warded off the cold: neither could the cold and snow reach his feet, expansive as they were; for, as usual, he had bootlegs outside, and if one pair of hose could keep out frost, he had no faith in that supposition and had put on three.

"Now, where are *you* goin'?" said Aunt Amos from her work-table, and in a sharp voice expressive of disgust.

The boy ducked his head and thumbed the paper cover of a thick music-book beneath his left arm. He muttered a few words.

"Singin' school! Who said to-night was Friday?" demanded Aunt Amos, looking out over the tops of her glasses. "This is Wednesday: who said it was Friday?"

"Tise, he said so,—he make foolings." Gottlieb

looked at the men by the stove as if for information; then again ducked his head, from which he soon began to remove his fur cap.

"That's a joke on you, Gottlieb," said Uncle Amos. "Is Tise here?" he demanded, so that he need not seem to encourage unseemly mirth at the boy's expense.

"Tise has gone by Peter's," said Gottlieb.

Aunt Amos looked severely grave to hear that her hired man had joined his boon companions in a saloon, but was used to it. Tise had learned to drink in the army and had persevered with a regularity that would have been praiseworthy in any laudable pursuit.

"Well," said she, "take off your coat and help me do up this work. Friday night you can go, and don't you let Tise fool you again."

Gottlieb doffed his scarf; then in a length of time that precluded any possibility of aught else in transit, swallowed a fine large section of pie and a bit of cheese. In wondrous short order, seeing that Aunt Early held the helm, the table was cleared, the dishes washed and placed for breakfast, the tea-kettle emptied and hung away in the pantry, the dish-pan beside it, the chairs in order; and so was Gottlieb free, and Aunt Early with Uncle Early and Lemuel joined the family in the parlor.

When the good-nights had been said Lemuel's thoughts went back to the contrast between his lot and the cheerful content of even this one evening. He had ills in a variety; did his wife likewise suffer? He was sure that she did. Busy in thinking, without a word he said the prayer he did too often as a formal

habit and was quickly in bed. He did not move. Tired herself, his wife noted the homely luxuries of the pretty room, and her heart was full of rest and thanksgiving that this visit had come to them.

Quickly she was asleep. Hours after she awakened in a flood of moonlight in lambent white sheen falling over her low bed. The room was transformed into a nook in a cloud; there were common objects by day now invested with new and unthought-of beauty.

The face beside her own was turned to the brightness, upon that face glistened crystal drops as of a tired child who has mourned, cried itself to sorrowful slumber.

She softly laid her hand on her husband's pillow.

The pillow was damp with his tears.

CHAPTER VI.

IN THE MORNING.

"DID you sleep last night?" he said.

They had but opened their eyes to the day when Sam beat a roll-call on the door of their room.

To stop the ceaseless noise they were making haste to open. "Pretty well," said she guiltily. "I had a deuce of a time getting to sleep," said Lemuel, brushing his hair. "See here, Mattie, take this; you and the girls may want to buy something; you know I'd be glad to give you more if I had it."

He pushed it into her hand. As if to avoid a reply he took up his coat, opened the door to Sam, when both went down to the kitchen and thence out to the barn before breakfast. His wife holding "this" in her left hand while fastening on her collar saw that it was a five-dollar bill.

How kind at heart he was. She could understand what that money meant to him. It, in truth, left him a solitary five-cent piece. Out of money, he must plod along on foot to the store, cold and dark as it was in the street-cars lined with soaking, muddy hay.

No more money for him until the "Fifteenth," rule of Teller, Stoltz & Co., and business was business. Again, he had small chance for luncheon; in the army

he had staved off hunger with hard tack and survived it. His wife wondered if it would once more be his diet. Very plain to understand, as he *could not* eat food from a pail, or a newspaper, however tempting cold bread and meat might be in that shape. Anyway, how could he buy hard tack from the first to the fifteenth and no money? Poor Lemuel; dear, kind, true-hearted man. He did love her; even when so churlish. Poor comrade. She *would* be as brave as he was, if it was no effort to plan how to do it, as she stood there looking at that precious bill, in that warm, sunny room with its east and south windows showing a winter landscape so lovely that the last look at her bill was one of contempt that life must be arranged on a hard cash basis.

Lemuel went down to the barn; the morning air was keen and frosty. He saw Sam's doves, laughed with little Ned at the pigs and the funny new calf.

Ned went with the boys to help water the horses, but Lemuel was already cold; his neat coat was very thin; he would return to the house.

There was his wife. Over her head and shoulders was Aunt Early's thick shawl.

He stepped more quickly to be with her.

"Lemuel," said she with a movement he did not understand until she had left the bill in his pocket. "Lemuel, I won't have this money. Don't you suppose I can count as well as you? Oh, my dear! I think you are as brave and noble a man as God ever made; I do, indeed."

"Tut, tut, Rosy," he said — it was an old pet name,

in oblivion for many a year. She looked up into his face and an old smile, forgotten, too, for many a year, broke over her face, and taking him under the folds of that ample shawl both walked on together.

Thanksgiving in the country would be a tame day without its church service.

In the family of Amos Early, one to have stopped at home indifferent to the calls of the church would have been regarded as a rank unbeliever, infidel, or whatever name told of absolute unworthiness

Dinner was the climax of the day; Betsy was this year the one to stay at home to attend its multiform demands.

The rest of the family in due season started off on foot for the half-mile walk to the simple church. From the four cross-roads vehicles of all sorts were now approaching the church — road-carts, with the *bone-bound* chested farmer's son, sitting stoop shouldered for all his health and strength; again, an erect figure bowling along over the hard road; then a lumber wagon crowded with its bundled-up load, with their shawls, scarfs, fur caps, quite shaggy enough to suit the old weather-beaten faces showing below; now a family carriage packed full of girls and boys, with the baby on mother's lap, and father driving; following this an old "one-hoss shay," in it an ancient couple to suit its antiquity.

Flying along the road now came Gabriel Strong's fast horse with pride, dragging the road-cart behind it. One passenger was Gabriel just back from New York. Sue was by his side, dressed in a suit from the city

with not an item about it, hat included, to shock those dreadful people who will persist in their sentimental nonsense concerning "symphonies of color." Symphonies! Shades of Beethoven and ministers of art defend us! A dress, a gown, a paltry something to stand between us and the weather, the road, the rain — a *symphony!!*

The clear-toned bell bade all to hasten, the ones on foot as well as the riders of every sort. A comfortable crowd of happy, prosperous people from first to last, who, together, had labored to reclaim the country from the wilderness, and now almost equal in wealth and altogether equal in social life, if no one ever seemed to think, or care, or speak of that, were enjoying the rewards of a well-spent life. There was a scene of cordial greeting and mutual friendliness that any one would delight to share, when the people came into the vestibule of the church and waited for a moment to shake hands and speak as they met.

Since the days of Lemuel Gibbon's rural life in England, in no like exhibition of mutual good will had he shared. His bankrupt father, who had squandered more money than would have served to buy out and out a dozen such townships, had died, leaving for his unfortunate son debt and the disgrace of it, aside from the less desirable heritage of paternal harshness as a remembrance. Lemuel did not forbear to look back bitterly at what might have been.

To his wife, reared in her town loneliness, from the poor work girl, to the despised position of wife to a poorer man, valueless to his community (save for the

brief years he had served as an iron-nerved soldier) the sight of beaming faces about her, quite often in good will for her, as her people introduced the city strangers, was a marked epoch in her life.

Too soon the congregation were in their seats and the mild-faced minister, with a voice of love, began the opening prayer—a gentle, a softening, a loving prayer. Before it, care sunk down out of sight; Lemuel gave himself up to worship, and his wife forgot her morbid imaginings.

Susan sat beside Gabriel Strong in the choir; there were seven other singers whose united efforts in several "set pieces" were distracting beyond description. Even Gabriel, who had been to New York City during a huge "musical festival" (equally distracting in its way), remembered choice bits of quartette and solo singing and a lone morsel of a tiny chorus from the general uproar; and resolved in the first place to quit the choir, and in the second to talk to Susan with the delicately-hinted object of inducing her to reform her style of singing.

Gabriel was innocently about to launch into troubled waters. Had he experienced the meaning of "heart-ache" he would have been wiser. Susan, in the meantime, glanced over the congregation and attended upon the minister by fits and starts, really, for the most of the time, thinking of what she was going to give as her sentiment at dinner, and how she was going to be very careful of her voice so as to be able to sing about the stars in heaven that evening, with due effect.

When at the end, all the people rose and united their

voices in the doxology, Lemuel did not dare to join with them, but for him it was a time of breaking down of old coldness. Gabriel Strong, in the fullness of his favored lot in a world of sorrow, felt the thrill of that soul-stirring harmony more deeply than any pleasure he could connect with the musical remembrances absorbing his nimble brain during the time of the service.

With Susan at his side he had no thought of the rapidly-scattering crowd. His road cart left all behind and when he turned the corner to take the road to her father's farm it was quite singular to observe how his horse fell into a slow walk. Upon it Sam made comments for the benefit of Ford and Walt.

But Gabriel had something to say very important; how could he say it whirling through the air with keen wind cutting his face. Sam should have been more considerate.

The clear voice of Gabriel Strong was especially soft as he said, "Susan, I'm going to leave the choir."

"What for?"

"Don't like it. You come, too."

"No, sir. What would I leave the choir for?" Susan tightened up the fur band at her throat and then pushed her hands in her new tan-colored kid gloves down into her muff, as if bracing herself for an encounter requiring as much logic as ready wit. "What's the use of singing if you don't make any music?" demanded Gabriel. He turned his head at the sound of a familiar voice near by. The three brothers of Susan.

"Hurry home to dinner, Sue," called Sammy slackening his rapid walk an instant. He looked very happy.

"Music!" said Susan, cool to her loving brother, "Humph!"

"Don't be angry, Susan," urged her companion. "I just want to ask you if there is any good in our singing a lot of stuff that sounds like sixty."

"Who said *that?*" demanded she, frigidly.

"I *say* it."

"You're mighty critical since you come home from New York."

"Not so"—he began.

Hastily she went on. "Next thing you'll be telling me that there's no music in, 'When the stars shine.'"

"Well, there aint," he cheerfully admitted, quite complacent to have so admirable an opening for what he had to "hint," as it were, thrust upon him.

"Very good, Gabriel Strong," said Susan Early. "If you don't like to hear me sing, don't listen, that's all, for I shan't leave the choir, and I'll sing, 'When the stars' if I want to."

"What's the good of flaring up?" said Gabriel; "I know something's wrong in it. I like to hear you sing, of course; you know I like to hear you sing."

"I'll tell you what it is," said Susan, who did not take as kindly to instruction as many a fine lady who smiles at plain criticism from her friends to her face, roundly expressed, expecting to return the same when demanded and deemed as mutual favors, "I'll tell you what it is," said Susan, "since you began to go to New York nothing here is good enough for you. I expect before long to hear you say that I am not the one for

you, and that I'd better hunt up some one else and let you go."

"If you want to think I'm as base as that," said Gabriel, deeply hurt, "I've nothing to say."

"Anyhow, you find fault with everything," said Sue.

"Why, Susan!"

"I do hate folks that can never be satisfied," said foolish Sue.

"I despise folks who don't know good from bad," he said shortly.

"That means me," she said.

"Oh, if you have a mind to apply everything to yourself, I can't help it," he answered.

It was at this stage of the conversation that the yellow cart pulled up by the kitchen stoop, and without another word Susan jumped out, and was in the house in a hurry.

Gottlieb this time was on hand and rattled the cart down to the barn so vigorously that Gabriel expected to see it knocked into splinters by the heels of "Flying Dutchman," his horse.

Once well in the house he was received with cordiality, but Susan, whose eyes shone, and whose flushed face told of anger, was coldly polite. At dinner Gabriel was wretched beneath the constant flow of his ready wit and laughter.

CHAPTER VII.

DINNER!

To the unsophisticated mind of the youthful Gottlieb dinner upon the day of Thanksgiving was wholly wanting in traditions of any sort. All the morning had he worked for Betsy, who had made close observations with conclusions in accordance with her data that a boy was contented and happy only while eating; also, to get the full use of a boy's talents it was necessary to feed him. She fed her aide-de-camp. He had done nobly — beaten eggs, prepared vegetables, carried things. Betsy was well served, Gottlieb was happy. If the consumption of half a chicken left from the chicken pies, blocks of mince, apple and pumpkin pies, cold ham in nice lean scraps, a handful of raisins, an orange, a half lemon with sugar, a lot of chocolate, a handful of lump sugar, a doughnut, a slice of cake, a whole leg of turkey, besides apples with Tise in the early morning, and a substantial breakfast — I say if the consumption of these items would not serve to keep any boy going, Betsy did not know it, and she was satisfied with her success.

Dinner he declared was no good for him; he had had to eat all he could eat. To skate as long as daylight lasted was his earnest wish, to which Betsy offered no

objection. Ned was of the same mind, but having as yet the hope of gastronomical joys to come, skating might be postponed.

Tise felt bashful about making his appearance at state dinners. After an early luncheon he made quick time in arriving at his favorite resort, Peter Heinze's saloon.

Peter was a politician; friends from a natural good heart with every one, to the extent of taking to his affections some Irishmen—as the County Treasurer and Tise himself, not a bad fellow in his way; but there is a strong probability that motives of policy in the Irish friendships were the governing motives of Peter's conduct and general course with regard to them.

At any rate, Tise felt quite at home in Peter's saloon (quite too much at home, Aunt Early said to him more than once, with undisguised acidity in look and tone). There he would sit in idle joy, and play cards and drink beer till any hour; then go home, uncertain as to way, unsteady as to step. For the rest of the week after he would be useless to himself and every one else.

It was a problem that Tise, with a better chance now than Amos Early had when a young man, associated his greatest happiness with idleness and delights of unlimited beer.

Aunt Early would worry about Tise later when she had time; now, with her family about the loaded table, she was fully engaged.

At the sight of turkey, goose, chicken, beef, ham, pork and beans, every farm vegetable, all sorts of side

dishes, served on the long, daintily-spread table, Sam was in supreme bliss. Uncle Amos and Ford carved. Aunt Early poured out the tea; the girls passed the various side dishes as it was convenient.

They were not too refined to once in a while remark on the beauty of the cookery. If the boys did not do it justice, and the girls in passive enjoyment gave due attention to favorite dishes, and if Lem and Tildy and little Ned did not declare that no dinner ever was so delicious, and if Uncle Amos did not enjoy it to see the rest so glad of his hospitality, Thanksgiving dinners where there are peace and plenty are greatly overpraised by those who love the institution.

At last came the pudding, conquered, and was gone; and mince pie and pumpkin.

Susan took away the cloth, and brought on dessert: ice cream, nuts and fruit.

"Now," said she after resuming her chair, "we call for 'sentiments' from each and all, instead of stiff, formal toasts, or speeches,—but speeches are in order, if any will favor the company with a speech so much the better. Applause comes next: some one applaud."

Some one did, coldly received; applause from all at the same time in the midst of a ripple of merriment.

As the afternoon sun shone in through the windows of the large kitchen, inviting a lover of beauty to gaze miles away over the white hills and gentle slopes of valley and meadow, the picture was one to delight the most indifferent. Within it was not ugly nor commonplace. The white floor of bare boards was not so bad; there was some charm about the warm, shining range:

the work-table piled up with dishes was in no disorder. The well-dressed company about the long dining-table were fine examples of that power behind the throne (of ambitious froth, and self-styled "leaders" of the people,) that boded well for the permanence of Republican ways and manners, and might have been a bright encouragement to those who look ahead only to anarchy with its consequent fatal end of Democracy.

All this to show that from the depths of this American kitchen poetry or eloquence need not be regarded as incongruous.

Very often on Sundays, and other fit occasions, "sentiments" over fine cups of coffee were popular. "Pa, you must begin," said Susan.

"Stop husband," said his wife; "first I want each one of us to tell of something we have to be thankful for." She mentally added that if Tise and "that boy" had only kept in, what a good exercise this would have been for them.

"Let's hear from you, Neddy," said Maria, "what have you to be thankful for?"

"Cause I'm here," said the lad promptly.

"The dear child," said Aunt Early, "just hear that, pa."

Amos laughed. "Neddy's right. He's glad to be here, and we're glad he's here, and I'll see that he stays as long as he can." "Yes indeed," said all. "What I'm thankful for," he continued, "is ma over there."

The girls and boys laughed a little at this, as if pa and ma were not matters of course to them,— young and thoughtless boys and girls,— young men and maidens more strictly speaking.

"I 'm thankful, too, for you, Amos, and for these dear children all about us. I 'm thankful that all of us are united in this dear old home. But if I should begin to tell of my causes for thanksgiving they would be more in number than the sands of the sea." The good old lady spoke fervently; she ceased as one who ends a prayer.

An appropriate pause ensued.

Crawford was next. "I," said he, "am thankful for all that wheat."

The girls sought silent consolation from each other's glances, as ones in search of new ideas, not those every-day, practical subjects, save Betsy, who said, "I, like Ford, am thankful fire has not destroyed what cyclones have spared."

"Good," said all, at a point so well put.

A patter of nut-shells in glass plates for a moment alone broke the silence; then it was Gabriel Strong who spoke:

"I am thankful, —" he began.

Sammy found a chance to say a word for his favorite, and thus interrupted:

"Gabe is thankful for the girl he left behind him." (Sue, of course, when he went to New York.)

Sammy took jokes for their merits, with eye single to the fun of their application. It was the sweeter to him that Gabriel was mute, and that Sue became over-red and angry at a distance too wide to box her saucy brother's ears. The hearty "Ha! ha!" of the company was zest to Sam's mirth, so on the whole Lemuel's next fell flat.

"I," said he, "am thankful to have my place in the store."

"I," said cousin Tildy, "am like Ned, thankful to be with you all to-day."

Then said Maria, "I am thankful for the country at peace."

"Sure enough," said her mother, to whom war was a horror.

"And I," said Sax, "am thankful for my new bicycle."

"Huh!" said Walt, "I am thankful for Zep."

Then Sam added earnestly that he was thankful for his dinner, when his mother became sad at the levity of her youngest son, and in fact at his two brothers also.

Betsy said something to the effect that Sam's Thanksgiving must be in a measure dampened in its ardor by his small (comparatively small) capacity to enjoy his dinner with what he desired to comsume—this remark being received with laughter, while Sam muttered that he guessed he was all right.

Sue was last, and made haste to end this part of the programme, so as to enter upon what was more to her taste; that is, the "sentiments."

"I am thankful," she said, "well—I guess, because I'm not a *boy*."

The sarcastic glance at Samuel, which came with these words seemed to throw that youth into an ecstasy of mirthful ebullition, so that his mother nudged him secretly and urged him to behave.

But in the din and chatter ensuing Gabriel Strong

felt that his lot was not a "happy" one, for Susan noticed him not, neither did she address to him a single word.

Fresh, hot coffee was now served in whitest china for the closing of the feast to begin.

With a form of interest, each occasionally remembered his coffee by sipping a few drops, but the true business of the hour was to listen to sentiments uttered standing, and reply to them, or discuss them, as one pleased.

Crawford began promptly.

"The President of the United States." (Applause).

Then Lemuel.

"The Queen of England." (He would have said "Her Majesty, the Queen," but adapted his loyalty to Republican ears in a form not objectionable, as he modestly hoped).

Likewise great applause.

From Amos Early, who did not stand on account of his knee.

"The soldiers who helped to preserve the government; we can't do too much for them."

Studious, thoughtful Maria who read the papers said, rising slowly and with dignity, when the talk after her father's sentiment was ended:

"I quote from Plato's *Republic*," said Maria; "a grand study for everyone in this country; my sentiment is this: 'If the citizens of a Republic neglect their political duties, they must consent to be governed by inferiors.'"

Applause with enthusiasm. Maria felt that she was appreciated.

It was Betsy who came next. In her love of epigram the sacrifice of truth to point her sentiment would be declared a fact by some dissenters who have no taste for poetical justice.

When the faces up and down the table were turned to her in expectation, with the round lines of *her* face well set in an effort to look stern, she said: "The women of America, who have no rights that the white man is bound to respect."

"Why, Betsy!" said her mother. The rest laughed and applauded, but Betsy had been in earnest and sat down to sip her coffee in silence.

Sax said, "Work and Win."

Walt, "Never give up the ship."

Sam stood up with a sober face which convinced no one of his true gravity, while his mother cast upon him a look of expostulation mingled with anxiety. He gave this as his sentiment, "The dying year," and so sat down. From all save his mother this was received with peals of laughter. When Sam joined in he made some slight observation about talent thrown away.

Now came Susan's turn. With an air, said Sue, "As long as 'the stars shine in heaven afar' may the sweet influences of music never cease to 'enlighten the world.'"

Applause.

"Amen," said a low voice.

But Sue was not ready to be good friends just yet.

Little Ned was next, and he stood up and went through a school piece in a charming manner, proving that child as he was he was able to enter into the spirit of the proceedings.

This led his mamma to timidly give as her sentiment, "Universal education, the keystone in the arch of a new civilization."

Received with great praise of the quiet being who was never supposed to be in the least "clever."

Gabriel was last and said, "The Day we celebrate. Let us one and all rejoice and be glad as becomes a a people so richly endowed with heaven's choicest blessings."

This appropriate finale brought Gabriel his mead of praise.

Sue's momentary vexation was gone, but true to a girl's perverseness, as they now left the table, instead of going with that handsome Gabriel to their favorite nook in the parlor, the brilliant eyes of her lover searched vainly for look or word, —for her pretty head she turned the other way.

CHAPTER VIII.

"LET us go out to the gymnasium," said Gabriel to the boys.

They agreed instantly, and the black coats were soon out of the way of the busy housemaids. With so many hands to hasten the work, Aunt Early's kitchen was in order in short metre.

"Ma," said Maria, "let us all go and take a walk."

"On the meadow," said Betsy.

"The boys are all in the barn," said Sue.

They were bundling up in scarfs and wraps to walk "just around the place." "No good to get out hats and best cloaks for that," said Aunt Early.

"They are running the risk of breaking their necks on the trapeze, or getting black eyes from those ugly boxing-gloves. Ugh! how I hate 'em."

"Me, too;" said Aunt Early. "We will walk in the meadow till we see the boys comin' back to the house."

They did so. Tildy, Susan, Betsy, Maria, Aunt Early, in grotesque hoods and shawls. The clear air would be with them, the declining sun cast long shadows, as in a scattering, broken line, with need of care to keep a footing where the snow had blown off the frosty grass, they went down the hill toward the meadow

and were soon lost to sight by a turn in the road where it curved around the little barn, long since a ruin.

Several rods west of the house, in the great hay barn, the boys fared yet better.

"Oh, I say, Sam," said Lemuel, "is this your gymnasium, then?"

Walt, Sax, Sam, Ford, together with cousin Lemuel and slim "twelve-year old" Ned, were gathered in the broad open space left by the immense double doors now wide open. Amos had said that he was "tired" and would lie on the lounge to read the paper. "Oh, pa," had said his daughter Sue, "that means a nap." Perhaps it did, but Amos had remained up to the house.

"The barn was all the place we had," said Sam, "but it does well enough. We left the hay out of this corner. Here's a fine place to swing by your knees."

In less than a second Sam was suspended in mid air from a trapeze, and hung head downward swinging to and fro in a manner frightful to behold. Walt and Sax vaulted into the bars. Ford came to the front with arms full of boxing-gloves. One pair he proceeded to pass over to Lemuel.

"Ow!" said little Ned.

The boy jumped as one who had seen a ghost when he was neither in a state of expectation, nor yet of preparation to behold that much-talked-of individual.

The faces of the boys were turned down from above. Ford and Lem stopped short with their begloved hands well out in one of the positions of boxing.

"Hello, Dutchy!" said Ford. "How came you here in that white shirt and your Sunday pants?"

Gottlieb moved out of his hay covert and said with a grin, "Broke trough."

"Did, hey?" said Ford, sparring a bit. "You look red and warm; been up on the bars?"

The boy grinned again but made no other answer.

They left him to his whispered communications with Ned, and in the excitement of boxing forgot the youngsters, Gottlieb sixteen and Ned twelve.

Lemuel explained some new turns and twists that he understood. Gottlieb and Ned had a game all to themselves, fine fun it was, too. Ned's father heard a familiar giggle, and bending up his head just in time to catch Ford's blow under his chin, saw his son with Gottlieb on the bars.

"Hang on tight," he shouted, then he returned Ford's blow straight from the shoulder, so that that brawny youth had to take time to pick himself up off the barn floor.

Gabriel was going up a rope hand over hand: by this means he gained possession of a swinging affair described by the boys as the "high trapeze;" it was twenty feet above the hay on the floor. Therein sat Gabriel like a cherub in the air above them. Four or five feet below this was a second affair of the same sort, and this hung from a beam five feet distant, in position to jump from one to the other, at a delicious risk of neck and limb at each bold, not to say fool-hardy, venture.

To arrive at either trapeze hand over hand on the rope dangling from the lofty beams of the roof was no trick at all.

Lem had to take off his boxing-gloves to show Walt a

new wrist movement with the black and gilt Indian clubs. It should be explained that Lemuel's daily noon visit to the gymnasium of the "Y. M. C. A." was a "means of grace," perhaps literally, that he improved to the utmost limit of possibility. It kept up the tone of his muscles, it was a relief and a change; and, best of all, from that bit of regular practice he found a reserve force to carry him through the confining rigor of ten hours a day at a desk.

The barn was an airy theatre for amazing feats of strength and skill from the active gymnasts who had the floor. Yet how many things might happen.

Suddenly Ned, from his high perch, called out impulsively, "Oh, papa, just see Gottlieb."

At the same instant, Gabriel, from above, exclaimed, "Look out, there, you blockhead!"

The faces below were turned up to see the boy. There on the second trapeze he *stood*, stiff-soled, heavy boots included, on the well-waxed, slippery, polished pole that the boys grasped with their hands.

He felt triumphant and said, in a proud tone, "So it iss in de circus in Chermany," simultaneously bending his body to swing rapidly.

The rest were helpless and horror-stricken. What grip had thick boots on that slippery rung? No sooner had the boy uttered these words, than he lost his balance and dropped down, to land with broken ankles, or any one of a dozen hurts to last for life.

To see that nerveless *lump* coming down: Sam, or the boys—all of them—could have jumped.

But Gottlieb!

Lemuel, quick and wiry, sprang to break the fall, if he were able; for the boy of sixteen, within a stone, weighed as much as he did.

Both rolled together in the dusty hay.

Ned instinctively rushed to his father, who was already on his feet again.

On the floor sat Gottlieb, with legs straight before him and uplifted hands, with his mouth open, as if dazed.

"Great Scott!" said Sam.

"Any bones broken, Lem?" said Ford.

Lem said he was not hurt by the fall; and the boy slowly, like an elephant, raised himself to an upright position.

"Sure you're all there, Dutchy?" said Sam.

It was so much of a lark, and Dutchy had so much confidence in his "staying" powers, that he was already inclined to do his feat over again.

"Look here!" said Ford, sternly. "Till you get a little sense, just keep out of this place, will you? Go into the house out of the cold."

"Ach," muttered Gotlieb, "that makes notting."

In a dejected air of defeat he moved to the door for his cap. Closely attended by little Ned, the two went up the road, having determined to explore the wonders of Gottlieb's wood-house chamber.

"It's a wonder the boy had n't broken his neck," said Lem. Sam remarked that he did not see how Lemuel had got there so quick. Gabe, hanging by his knees from the same place, declared that the boy had

no sense. They forgot the accident as the delights of training began now to open up in good earnest.

Nothing would have called them away from these sports but the keen desire to try Walt's new Winchester rifle before it grew too dark to do so.

It looked as if it were no trick for each one to hit the mark.

On hand again were Gottlieb and Ned. However, there were no further accidents. It is true that Sam risked something in that line when he sent Gottlieb to find the bullets. This was avoided by Lem's neglecting to fire for the time, the boy presenting a ludicrous spectacle crawling about in the grass on his hands and knees.

But the night drew on apace; the sun was out of sight, and in the great twilight stillness the sound of fresh young voices in eager words concerning biceps, grand shots and all that,—we repeat, the sound of these bright voices had in it a musical delight; at the same time there was in it all a hidden significance almost pathetic.

Waiting, even now at the house, and fine for the evening, were the other half of the family who captured these new-era adventurers with many a merry chiding.

Ah, but where was Gabriel, asked a certain young lady, with a very blank face, of her dutiful brother Sammy. Answer brief and to the point that Gabe had gone home. "Too bad," said Aunt Early, sitting there in the parlor in a chair of state, "but we must n't keep him all day; his mother will be lonely." Susan went

to sing her song and did bravely. She came out strong, so to speak, on the finale, only a trifle sharper than her usual "reading."

She wondered if Gabriel was so awfully anxious to "visit with his mother." Secretly she scorned the idea: pray had n't he "visited with his mother" for twenty-five years?

CHAPTER IX.

A MYSTERY.

"I DECLARE, Susan," exclaimed Betsy the next day at noon as the two girls were doing up the after-dinner work, "what is the matter with pa and ma? They have been whispering together all day."

"And ma acts as if actually afraid I'd badger her into telling me, as she knows well enough I can," said Sue. "Here's pa, now. Hallo, pa, I know something and I won't tell what," said she shaking out her dish-towel with a snap. Their father stumped about the room to hunt for his whip and gloves. "That boy" was holding Zep before the door.

"Ef you gals think I'm agoin' to tell you anything else," said he with his grizzly old face not at all firm, and an entreaty in his manner as one who begs to be let off easily, "I won't do it, that's all."

"You're going to take Tildy and ma to town," said Betsy.

"You and ma and Tildy are going over to the quarry to tea," said Sue.

"You are going to get up a surprise party for us," said Betsy.

"Guess agin," said their father, as he hastened to

leave them, having bundled himself up for a drive in the sharp air.

His laugh was lost as the door closed behind him. His round old back was out of sight from the stoop before the girls had time to open the door.

The mystery began in the morning, when pa and ma began to whisper in the pantry before breakfast. It kept on when Sammy came up from the post-office and informed them that Jim Sadler, the postmaster, had gone off and got married; sly, wasn't he? And was for closing up the office and going on to his wife's farm only he was afraid it wouldn't be straight.

The mystery grew worse and worse "like the measles," Maria said, indignantly. "Only," added Sue, "they couldn't get it to come out."

It held its own against all assaults of the enemy through the rest of the week, even up to the next Wednesday.

Such whisperings; pa and ma had so much to talk of and so much to do, and how beautifully they would relapse into silence when one of their olive branches came in hearing range. Both boys and girls were fairly bewildered at this new turn. It was a matter of course for *them* to have little affairs of mysterious import; but for pa and ma!

Gabe was bright, said Sam, *he* could find out all about it in no time, but then he never came near them.

Where was Gabe?

And with the severe mien of a schoolmaster, Sam turned to Susan. Gabriel Strong had gone to town Sunday and was not at church.

Poor Susan!

Sam found out all about that for he went over to the quarry for the very purpose, but he did not explain.

For once pa and ma were not to be coaxed nor teased into giving up to the young people.

To us, favored of the oracle, there need be no mystery. It must be, indeed, our good fortune to follow pa and Zep on the very ride that caused such endless curiosity in pa's family.

With a crafty smile on his face, or such a part of a crafty smile as his honest features would admit, Amos drew up his lap robe, said "Git up!" to Zep and dashed off — where?

Of all places for him, good, honest deacon, where but to Peter Heinze's saloon!

And he did not go to find Tise. That worthy was even now at home trying to work under difficulties. His head was heavy (this was Friday) his eyes were red, and if he saw two of anything as often as one, he knew that he had no just cause to complain of them — his eyes — for if they had served him as he deserved, instead of proving to him the error of his ways by a two-fold view of his point of sight, they would have multiplied it by a hundred-fold. Tise was careless in his toilet, too, upon this auspicious morning. It were trite to remark that his rumpled coat might, as far as looks go, have been his bed-gown for any number of years, yet it excelled the broken-down hat on his head, as it also did the limp waistcoat once an object of vanity to the poor fellow.

His temper generally uneven, was this morning only worse than the temper of his companion in arms, that

is to say Gottlieb, who, very often cross and testy, was giving his slow assistance in the construction of a wood-sled down by the barn.

It was a work beset with storms. More stupid than ever was Gottlieb. Tise was nervous and in haste. The boards would fall; Gottlieb would lose the screws. If a board was sawed the edge was sure to be out of line. If Tise was loud in his wrath, Gottlieb was accustomed to it and chuckled to himself. If Tise broke out into sundry strong expressions the boy was too stupid and absent-minded to heed the Irishman's anger.

Placing his boards in position Tise sent Gottlieb to the house for the auger; was it the fault of that innocent youth when, deluded by Ford (this time), he returned grasping the monkey-wrench? Vain to portray the silent look of what was intended to be scorn upon the white, demoralized face of Tise; equally vain to repeat his words of poignant pity, rage, distress, disgust at the sight of that "down-right idiot."

Amos on the road, at this juncture might have heard an outburst of Irish indignation, well-supported by German expletives. He was by far too engrossed in his scheme to notice it.

As a deacon Amos Early was aware that in going to a saloon he might compromise his good name. To-day he felt secure.

As a place of political meeting "Peter's" was popular.

The town-hall was not. In the first place it was generally shut up. Peter's place had never a like

charge laid to its door; again, to go to the town-hall you had to put on your best coat, that was formal. It was not so at Peter's. Then at the town-hall, if one desired the attention of the rest he stood up and made a speech. It was not so at Peter's; there, you all talked at once; the man with the strongest lungs could have the floor if he persevered in his efforts to gain it.

Peter himself was the leading politician of the county. However, this fact did not lift him up in the eyes of Amos Early. To his mind it was evidence *prima facie* that the fact of a man's holding an office was all that was necessary to prove that he was not the sort of a man he ought to be. To go into a crowd of happy-go-lucky men and talk was in the nature of agreeable excitement in which the dark, dull town-hall could never have a part; but to respect Peter as a man and a political leader was what no one in the county ever had a thought of doing. Yet they admitted that he was a good neighbor and not a bad citizen. The saloon they regretted. That it was a warm, jolly, cheerful, cosy place they sighed to admit. In fact the whole subject and its bearings, especially at election time, was complex; a problem they could not solve.

Why, oh why, as Gabriel would have said, for one thing, didn't they coax Peter to exchange his saloon for a coffee-house, without any milk and water, thin faces, or cant about it? But, then, as a demand for that supply, a new generation of every-day idlers must have been reared to drink no beer, as well as the few who were not idlers and who enjoyed Peter's goods.

CHAPTER X.

AMOS EARLY AS AN OFFICE-SEEKER.

So, stamping his feet on the saw-dust of the floor was Amos.

Zep he had securely fastened, buckled on her blanket, knocked off the balls of snow from his own boot-heels, and closed behind him the door of Peter's "bower."

Thick about him hung evergreen wreaths for present decoration and anticipation of Christmas. The smell of stale beer and old tobacco-smoke pervading the shut-up air gave Amos no pang, for the army had hardened him to worse.

As his eyes became accustomed to the difference of the light within and without, he was glad that for the time he was the only customer.

Peter shook hands in an effusive greeting, which was honest as far as it went, but he felt guilty to meet the deacon, who was one of his constituents, and although on his red, round face was a smile, he felt truly downcast, not to describe his chagrin by a harsher expression. He had certain reasons of his own for fearing that his good character was at stake, hence it was not strange that he was silent and ill at ease.

He was in the frame of mind of a school-boy expecting

deserved punishment. I am afraid that while this good man, so far, was honest, as politicians go, he was in a clique that could be, to a very limited extent, named as a machine or an embryonic ring, of which, alas, Peter was boss! and now, as innocent head of a few simple manipulations, solely to serve for personal ambitions not in the least culpable, poor Peter had been, as his bland political co-worker would have said, "left."

Amos had come to ask the services of a man of whom his opinion savored less of respect than submission to a necessary evil. In this position he was constrained to be awkward, too. Peter knew better than to ask his caller to drink anything. After the compliments of the day, he tried to look happy, and remarked as he arranged his glasses on a tray:

"Vell, dot vas a pad peesness!"

Peter spoke of what was on his mind; namely, his co-worker these latter months, the Irish County Treasurer.

"Wall, I dunno," replied Amos, unbuttoning his great coat, as a man who has come to give out critical remarks on a subject requiring time.

"Y-a-a-s," said Peter, referring to the bland Irishman, "he vas immer zo güt," and Peter thought how he was "left."

"So he was," assented Amos, speaking of the "sly" postmaster.

"Aber," said Peter, leaning on the counter, and speaking of the man *he* had loved and lost, "Vhat vas dot for a rascal, eh?"

"Oh, not so awful bad," said Amos, raising up his

eyebrows; "why shouldn't any one—you or I—do the very same thing, but—"

Peter shook his head and protested, his full blue eyes wet with tears.

"Mich? Ach, Gott in himmel, nimmer, nimmer: Ach, nein!"

"Why," said Amos, shoving his hands down into his pockets as he rested one elbow on the counter, "why, Peter, it's not so bad; what's the worst about it is for a fellow to leave us in the lurch so sudden."

"Y-a-a-s, dot iss zo," assented Peter again. "He vas immer sooch a güt mann; aber now he iss gone, ve can't get dot six-hundret thaler, woll den: ve tont vant dot mann. Dot geld iss all gone—vhat shall ve do mit dot mann?"

Peter left his post behind the counter to go to the stove in the middle of the room and shake up the fire and came back to lean against his shelves behind the bar before Amos found words to ask his next question, which he did with caution, so that Peter might not discover his ignorance.

"Sho!" said Amos. "They can't find him then?"

Peter drew a deep, long breath, and shook his head and elevated his shoulders with a jerk and emphasized it all with a see-saw movement of his two out-spread palms.

"Vell," said he, "Nimmer haf veso gut a Treasurer. Now he hass—vhat you say,—skipped oudt mit dose six-hundret thaler. Dot geld iss gone. He iss gone auch: let him go, ve ton't vant him, eh?"

"That's so," said Amos. "He's no good without the funds."

Peter's face cleared in a manner to suggest scudding clouds over the face of the moon.

"But," said Amos, shifting his standing position to an upright, "about that postmaster's agoin' off an' gittin' married so sudden."

The countenance of the fat man behind the bar grew sad again, as one belonging to a man whose administration is about to be universally impeached.

"Y-a-a-s, dot vas pad; dot make blenty droubbles, too, mit mich."

"Got anybody to put in?" said Amos shortly; but this only because he was really so breathlessly anxious.

Peter could not know that. He sadly attributed the manner of his influential constituent to utter disaffection. He said persuasively, "Pretty soon ve must find some pody. Aber dere iss no von. Oh, ja, dot make much droubbles."

Peter picked up his long pipe with an air of melancholy. Amos began to think his case was gained, but not to seem over anxious he said stolidly, "It's mighty bad for us to think that any moment we may be left without a postmaster. Do you remember Lem Gibbin?"

"Oh, y-a-a-s;" said Peter, fingering his box of tobacco. "Vas he in te var?"

"Same one. Now you see he's a likely young feller, an' bein' as his wife's sickly — Miss Gibbin that is — perhaps you could figger him into that place. It would just suit all the neighbors. We do feel a leetle cut up,

hat's sartin, over the way things hev gone, — but wet don't blame you, Peter, 's sure 's you live. No one kin say that you didn't do 's well as you could in the hull business. Just fix up that place for Lem an' it's all right."

"Ach zo! I vill sent py telegraph," said Peter, puffing earnestly, "unt in von veek ve can see. I like dot Lem Gippin for postmaster unt ve fix dot peesness alle right for him; oh, ja, ja!"

Peter was cheerful again; a good deal of talk followed as to details not essential to be recorded; the main point was to ascertain if Amos could secure the important influence of this power — behind the *bar* — for the deserving man in question.

He had secured this influence.

He felt his case was won, and was jubilant under his commonplace, ordinary exterior, and hastened to acquaint his faithful wife so that she might share his joy. It was a struggle not to take the "children" into their confidence, but for once they were firm.

CHAPTER VIII.

WAITING.

LEMUEL'S visit was to extend through the week after Thanksgiving.

How much there was to fill the delightful hours, not excepting the interest and curiosity each one *enjoyed* at the absorbing mystery of Amos and his wife, concerning which no time nor corner seemed inappropriate to smile in and whisper. Such was the sense of relief and satisfaction of Peter Heinze that the townspeople were inclined to agree with him in regard to the County Treasurer's "skipping oudt" with his cash in hand, that what he could do for Lemuel Gibbon he did; and that was much. Sam had proudly exhibited his fine collection of rocks, fossils, and so forth, and a collection of pressed grasses from the meadow, to delight the eye of dear old Dr. Lapham himself, had he inspected the boy's treasures. Lemuel's Greek and Latin, and his scientific study — kept up in an odd hour as it chanced — came in most usefully. He made out a catalogue and labels which Sam read a thousand times in the purest, the noblest pleasure to become part and lot of one's experiences in a complicated world.

Then upon the evening of Monday, Lem and Tildy

had to go with all their cousins to the reading club. This met at a neighboring house and the twenty-one members were inclined to believe that its attractions rivalled those of the dancing club which each month held a party in the town-hall.

The visitors, Lemuel and his wife, found themselves in a handsome parlor, genially warm, lighted by the soft, steady glow of shaded lamps which seemed to them the most charming light in the world. The various members of the reading club — some rustic, some otherwise — were all present, ready to begin the work of the evening, which for the first half hour was devoted to a Latin exercise. Lemuel was amazed to observe how crude and elementary it all was. In a sort of hazy outline appeared before him new uses for his own acquirements, never estimated before at their true worth. It was something when a man was lucky enough to be among people who valued education, to have been a first-class man at an English university.

And how for these dreary years — Ah me! had he grovelled among the earth beetles? Could he yet escape? As yet he had never been able to discern a way clear to a higher and a more congenial life. At the unanimous request of the club, Lemuel for that evening took the chair as leader.

The general good cheer of his visit had brought to the surface many a softening emotion long dormant. A steady voice and a calm face and self-possession to do well his part before them, was what Lemuel did that evening, but it was with a full heart.

Upon the face of his wife could be traced the bright

light of one week's peace, plenty, and gladsome prosperity.

Its influence was a wonder. After they were all back home in Uncle Early's kitchen Ford declared that his cousin was growing young and beautiful. Sam said, "may my last end be like hers," at which his mother was so indignant that she tightly closed her lips and gave him a grave gaze that no word of his had the least power to soften. Lemuel did not see why Sam should joke. A pun he disliked but could swallow. Pure wit he enjoyed, but a joke: why, what was the sense of that he demanded of himself as often as he heard one. Hence Master Sam was unheeded. Lemuel made haste to declare that Ford was right, and was gracious to his wife as a lover. Tildy, with a mild acquiescence in that bit of flattery, gave them a soft, lambent smile, a "starry radiance" almost beautiful, and at once and forever sunk out of possible range of fancy the morbid thoughts of the past. Susan, in the midst of so much cheerful converse, was dull, if not quite unresponsive, and sad. Gabriel was invisible. Whither he had betaken himself was an inquiry she did not care to make. Those two brothers of hers, bad subjects, knew well enough that Sunday "Gabe" had been confined to the house with some slight indisposition, and that Monday he had been called to town. If they could have a joke on the boy Gottlieb, or on their sister Susan, equally sweet was the savor. If Susan would find out where Gabe had gone let her do it by her wits. Did it ever occur to Ford and Sam that a victim might study how to retaliate?

It was the evening after the club. The usual com pany gathered in Uncle Early's kitchen. What a bright, warm nook it was, with its lamps on the table, its company of darners and menders sitting about to finish that work before going to the parlor. The men with free minds had no work. Theirs had ended with the sun. Sitting to toast their knees, Uncle Amos and Lem smoked in unworried comfort. Aunt Early could put aside the week's darning with the pressure of several other like jobs that should be then and there completed. But she would not let the sewing be a bugbear, so quietly put it off to make up for it by extra exertion at another time. Aunt Early had some theories; she did not advance them, but in many a hard hour, visions of a woman's life, wherein said woman should be content to be master of one trade,—overseeing a house, for example—instead of one hundred trades, took shape in illusive hopes and fancies that seemed to her to have been born in heaven.

The boys had not come in from the barn. Their mother often turned her head to listen for them, momentarily expecting to hear the shed door close behind them with its accustomed bang.

Once or twice she thought she could distinguish shuffling foot-falls in Gottlieb's room above, but, interested in other things, paid no attention to it.

"Pa," said Betsy, "tell us about when you were in the army."

"I see," said Lemuel, "from the evening's paper, that they are growling because a bill is before Congress to give an annuity to each old soldier, together with

several hundred acres of land; not a slice of alkali desert, on the sordid conditions that we go and live on it, but a real, *bona fide*, out-and-out farm, by Jove!"

"Sho!" said Amos.

"Might better do that," said Betsy the epigrammatical, "than for Congress to give all the desirable land in the country to speculators."

"I should say so," said Susan, busy with her darning, snipping off the rough edges of a heartless rent.

Amos gravely knocked the ashes from his ancient pipe. He was lame that day, and with more effort than upon his well days, he stumped over to the clock-shelf to lay it aside. Settling comfortably again in his high-backed rocker, he said:

"Wall, ef the government sees fit to give me a little something for this game leg, I dunno as I'd throw my good luck over my shoulder."

"That's so, pa," said ma looking out over the top of her glasses with much sympathy.

It was time for Lemuel's wife to say something.

"You can hardly find an old soldier," said she, "who has not some infirmity to last him his lifetime. The worst effects of the exposure in camp come all these years after; every man has something or other to burden his few remaining years."

From her warm corner by the stove, Tildy spoke with great earnestness.

"I'd like to know of any one of Napoleon's soldiers who were braver than Lemuel. Look how he alone of his corps dared to carry despatches at Fort Hudson, at

what a risk. It's a wonder he pulled through without capture, or mortal wound."

"Never mind that, Rosy," said her husband, with a new expression on his face, as of a man brave and shy, praised openly for what he is glad to have done.

The eyes of his wife shone; she would have spoken, save that Betsy's crisp voice was heard the same moment.

"And pa, too," said she. "Pa, tell us how at —"

"Baytong Roosh," said Susan, helping out with her French, her Anglo-Saxon sister.

"That's it," continued Betsy. "Tell us how at that battle, you ran alone into the rebel ranks and recaptured your regimental colors, and how our boys followed to drag you back after you had mounted a cannon as a horse."

"Sho," said Amos, "that's nothin'."

"What a brave man you were, pa," said Maria.

Their father laughed. As he made no reply, Miss Betsy once more took the floor.

"If pa won't talk, nor Lem either, I'll just say for that *I* think" — she spoke with a pretty enthusiasm "Well, it's just this way," she said. "It never would do to interfere with the best interests of a great nation. The ones who might be first to destroy would be first to repent when they became wise to understand the science of political questions. I do hope the government will give the needy everywhere money for schools and universities for the state. Besides all that, it should be the duty of our government to take care of the rap-

idly-dwindling number whose best strength and endurance were spent to preserve that government. We cannot do too much for our old soldiers."

"True," said they all as a chorus. "I believe," said Susan, now repudiating her own and her sister's theory of the surprise party as her father and mother's secret, "I do believe, pa, that this was the secret you and ma have been whispering about all the week." Maria silent and busy, and Betsy threw down into the great basket their stocking darning and exclaimed with Susan, "That's it, that's it," at the same time with sharp-set curiosity awaiting the reply of their father, which was,

"Oh, it is, hey?"

"Pa is as mean as he can be," said all the young people speaking both to pa and ma. But all in vain. The affectionate parents shook their heads; with silent strong-mindedness most unheard of, each hoping in secret for good news with the yellow envelope that so seldom brought any word, either to themselves or their townsmen.

This scene of domestic quiet and peace was now brought to a sudden termination. An exceeding great uproar up-stairs in Gottlieb's room, a prolonged howl, a rush and a jump on the narrow, dark, back stairway, and as one who had at a bound descended from some upper regions of untold terrors, with arms flying like the continuations of a windmill, feet in wild bounds of afright, hair to match, with staring eyes, and voice full of laughter, tears, sobs, and rampant indignation, in the midst of them was — Gottlieb.

CHAPTER XII.

In the height of the confusion thus created he ejaculated: "Ach! Sammy put a *hen* in my bet — look vonce!" Without allowing his really alarmed hearers time to grasp his meaning, he ran up-stairs again, shirt-sleeves, pants, boot-legs all going at once.

Aunt Early, severe to austerity, with angular motion grasped a candlestick, marched to the stair door and disappeared up the stairs. To follow her was quick work for all but Amos. He sat in his chair and remarked for his own sole benefit, "Some o' them boys' tricks again."

From his silent laughter, he appeared to wish he was with the boys in his own proper person; being with them in the spirit was tame.

Very severe, Aunt Early grasped her candlestick; with a stern face her head rose up into the dark space above; and, not at all severe, the other heads followed suit.

Dim in the open window, in the farther gable of the garret, were another variety of heads, round in shadow and in a cluster. Not to be mistaken were smothered sounds of laughter, not to mention the tiny boyish giggle of little Ned, easily recognized by his indignant (?) parents.

While *our* party marched over to the bed, the window became shining, black and vacant. Two ends of what might be ladders were miraculously removed, and no heads were there.

With Gottlieb at her elbow, Aunt Early examined the bed. The others waited. Lemuel came to the front, thinking of the desperate assault of a discovered tramp, and had a set of steel muscles to greet him if occasion demanded.

But it was no tramp.

"Sure enough!" said the good lady afterwards, "Right down in the middle of 'that boy's' bed was poor old Whitey, between the quilts, nearly smothered and half frightened to death. She flew against me with a jounce. I did feel too angry with them boys when she cried Kwa! Kwa! Kwa! before she flopped over into a corner."

So it was. With articulate and inarticulate sounds of reproof, Aunt Early straightened out the bed. She was not in accord with a lot of laughing simpletons about her. Down to the kitchen she then led the way, in company with her staff, none now having any lingering fear of tramps.

Gottlieb, with many a quaking, composed himself to the slumbers of sweet sixteen. His dreams were disturbed by fears that old Whitey in the corner would alight upon the head that he had so tightly covered with the bed-clothes.

Aunt Amos, arriving in the kitchen, wore a face to which vinegar and lemons were milk and honey. Nor did she feel any sense of the innocence of her boys, sit-

ting there in good order, all ready to talk or do any evening duty required of them. Catching Amos in the midst of an underhand, wicked laugh with little Ned, upon him she threw the full blare of her uncompromising spectacles.

He sheepishly drew down the upturned corners of his mouth, and again stumped over to fill up his pipe.

"I do declare, Amos Early," said she, sternly, "you are as bad as them boys and a heap worse."

Thus saying, she took up her knitting, too overcome by Sam's latest joke to utter another word, and as for unbending a muscle of her face—

CHAPTER XIII.

WHY ABSENCE ON THE PART OF GABRIEL STRONG?

THE fortune of Gabriel Strong lay in his stone quarries.

To use his stone it must be broken up and removed from the ground.

In order to remove it, broken, from the ground, blasting was necessary; blasting was often effected by means of *Dynamite Cartridges.* To purchase a new supply of these dangerous explosives had been the object of Gabriel's trip to town.

Tuesday he had returned bringing with him the cartridges carefully packed. The uncanny box he deposited in a shed removed a safe distance from the house and farm buildings.

He had stopped over night in town to attend the opera, certain that the "boys" would explain his absence to all inquiring friends. With what impatience *she* would await his coming.

What a fine chance this would be to repay some of her willfulness. He remembered how illy she had taken his wise advice Thanksgiving. Like the hero in an opera singing his griefs, fears, hopes, plans, in solo, he thought of this painful subject in all its bearings.

"Long threatening comes at last," he whistled as he thought how fitting was this sentiment from the "*Merry War*" as applied to himself and his dear Susan. Long had he "threatened" his sweetheart with a lesson, now she should have it.

He would let her wait in vain for his company that evening.

That, my dear sir, will be as bad for you as for the other. True: then let it be so; he was not going there, and that decided it.

From the kitchen door of his mother's house, where the mild lady was busy with her day's quiet labors, never dreaming of the treason growing into definite shape in her son's kind heart, he walked along the foot-path through the snow toward the quarries. With a firm step he passed by the rickety door of his powder-house, busily thinking, when at that moment he plunged one foot deep into the hard drift at his left. With an air distrait he pulled it out and trudged on. Should he go to see her the next night, Wednesday? In truth he had a world of rarest news to tell since "last they met," only Thursday. It seemed months.

At the quarry he spent a long, long day, directing the men in blasting and in the daily routine, having to do with the work in general.

Again at dusk along the narrow track walked Gabriel Strong, moody, looking upon the world as the most stupid of all stupid humbugs he could imagine. Close about the ears was his sealskin coat collar, shading his gray eyes a fur cap to match; his strong hands were white and his fur gloves were new. His New York

suit beneath the handsome great-coat was of the choicest as to style and good taste. His working great-coat was left at the quarry as usual. Yes, in dress he was spick and span enough to spend the evening anywhere. Why not drive over to Sue's?

Very reluctant he forced himself to walk up to his door.

It was the last light of a winter day.

So absorbed was the young man in the discomfort of unhappy thoughts that the sight of a short, broad figure, crossing and re-crossing the field in the vicinity of the powder-house, passed unnoticed at the time.

With a cloud on his brow he walked into the house. He was silent before the guests at his mother's well-spread table. His mother did not believe in staying alone.

After supper, to the sorrow of an antediluvian maiden lady who admired him in the character of a gloomy young man, he did not go to the parlor, but marched directly up to the cosiest room in that cosy house, tossed aside his clothes and himself into bed to sleep the sleep of youth and health until seven of the clock the next morning.

Alas! when sleep is nature's blest restorer, when a young man is silent and distrait, why don't he follow the fine example of that young athlete, Gabriel Strong? His club said not a man in the country could stand up before him in a boxing match. And to the development of nerve and muscle the whole country seemed to be at this time absolutely devoted, "training," "gloves," "clubs," "Græco-Roman wrestling matches," all the

talk. When the boys were together this new craze gave their conversation a technical character to be understood only by the initiated. The craze set all the young men against drink and excess, save the excess of bars and dumb-bells. Their mothers devoutly hoped that in this they would not do themselves more permanent injury than by beer, or cigars, or tobacco and whisky. If they only *would* exercise the caution good sense suggested, it was a move in the right direction, as culture of all sorts is a move in the right direction.

Wednesday was not unlike its predecessor.

It was again dusk. Should this young man who had so punished himself, now obey the impulses of his heart? or should he keep on in this cruel course until further notice?

In how many a happy impulse had he paused before the door of his house to lift his face to the great sky above him. To-night, from the heavy heart within, came no beautiful visions at his call. The sky was inane, not a star had come. The grim waste on all sides was drear to the uttermost. The black trees, with no shadow in the darkening day, took shape like unblest thoughts in the mind.

In no sense of joy from a beautiful scene he threw himself down on a seat in the stoop, listlessly wondering if he had left everything as it should be; had he left any duty unattended in his day's work? There was the old hut wherein for safe keeping was a stock of blasting material. Since Tuesday morning he had not been there,

Better go and take a look, and by personal examination know if everything was as it should be.

By the way! Someone had crossed the field last night and returned again to the road.

Gabriel's sluggish mind, instantly on the alert, sprung into being at a bound, as if by a shock of his own blasting powder, giving him a sense of terrible alarm.

He had seen a short, broad figure the evening before — that big slouched hat, those round boot-legs, that ploughman's gait, — Gabriel quickened his pace to a run the sooner to be at the hut to inspect his various packages of explosives.

There was one person to whom this picture exactly corresponded: it was Gottlieb.

Gabriel pushed aside the old door, shoving on the bare ground, hanging as it did by one upper hinge.

Within all seemed as he had left it. But he must search more thoroughly. Not with a lamp to light the interior, but in the fast-dying twilight, with a hand that trembled in spite of himself he felt about the place. His eyes becoming accustomed to the gloom saw boxes, kegs, one or two paper bags, empty on the ground, all as he had last left it.

He had completed the circuit, excepting a last box. Therein reposed a dozen of a new explosive, far worse than any other to handle on account of the extreme danger arising from the least carelessness.

These were *Dynamite Cartridges*, made in scientific folly to usurp the place of *energy*, quite well enough before developed with simple powder. A substance,

this dynamite and its kin, well to be blotted out of existence by the laws of nations forbidding either its use or its manufacture.

If Gabriel had described his next hour and a half of horror, the weight of the anathemas alone would have moulded public opinion to this verdict: Death penalty for the use or the manufacture of these infernal machines in any form.

For now, with a touch of velvet, he felt among the gray, candle-shaped contents of the box. With increasing horror he as delicately, as carefully counted each as his icy fingers fell upon it.

He had counted them. In the dim light he stood up stock still, as if powerless to move; then, rallying every energy, fairly flew up the path to the barn. It was worse than he could have feared, for of all his powder and blasting explosives, it was here he found the theft had been committed.

One Dynamite Cartridge was gone—carried off by Gottlieb. Unless,—merciful heaven!—unless he had blown up the house and family of Amos Early, the dreadful missile was yet in the possession of that foolhardy boy. Never in the after-life of Gabriel Strong did he forget that hour. How obediently did his faithful horse obey whip and spur. To say that she knew the whole story of her rider's fear and agitation would hardly do injustice to her intelligence.

Gabriel endeavored to be calm, to prepare his mind for the worst, and to receive it accordingly.

Up the hard, white road he sped, with care at the

same time to guide his horse to the safest part of the slippery way.

Now a thought of Sam's practical jokes; then of that stupid Gottlieb's joke in return. Just like the boy—and Sue!

Was it already too late? Would he be able to get there in time? This was the time of all times for his sure-footed horse to stumble.

And stumble he did.

Was he injured? Gabriel in despair saw that his knee was sprained and that a slow foot pace was too painful to be undertaken unless the rider walked at his side. Here he was in the woods, a two-mile stretch ahead, no house in sight, up there on the north road, and a lame horse, and every moment frought with the burden of life or death. It took but a second to make arctic coat and shoes into a bundle to strap to the saddle, and then buttoning his short coat trim and snug, he was off on a run, leaving the disabled beast to follow.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DYNAMITE CARTRIDGE.

It was supper-time this very Wednesday. The familiar sight of the family about the table was the same as it was every night.

What puzzled the family was the unanimous spirit betrayed by pa and ma in watching the outside door.

Betsy had let down the snowy curtains; the red coal was very bright, too bright, in the stove. If not looked after soon, the fire would be in ashes. The white, bare floor, uncle Amos' high-backed chair in the corner, were fine touches in a homely home picture.

Sue seemed as gay as if for the first time in her comfortable life secret grief had not paled her bright cheek. To-night she was stately, if not, strictly speaking, beautiful. Hoping that some one would come, and with an idea that perhaps her father and mother had really planned a surprise party for their dear children, she was going to be ready whatever might happen: hence had called forth a slight remonstrance from her surprised mother by appearing at the supper-table in her very newest and best silk gown, all dark blue, in graceful lines of drapery with white lace at throat and wrists.

"Why, Susan Early, the idee!" had been her

mother's applause to her début. "Do you see that, pa? What air the young folks acomin' to?"

Susan didn't mind that, and glanced at the kitchen looking-glass to take a last survey of her hair, in a bran new style of coiffure. This was Tildy's doing, — a style noted in town the day before coming to make her visit. In the store where she saw it Tildy ardently wished that she had hair to dress in the same fluffy curves and bands. As she had not, she had tried its effect on Sue's pale locks.

Most hair is beautiful as wonderful when one studies its various needs and the uses suited to its nature.

Susan's hair brushed high upon her head, no longer concealed the milk-white neck, round, and with a dimple in the nape. Her broad, low forehead, denuded of wild shaggy bangs and frizzles — á la Broncha pony — ivory white, with an occasional tendril of soft, short curl, made plain, though long since doubtful, that her face was the mirror of many a varying expression besides the one Frenchy leer of which she herself had been unconscious.

Her father was well pleased at the improved appearance of his beloved daughter. He was not blind to the fact that the other girls had taken cue and were especially well dressed to-night. So far it was well, "fine feathers make fine birds," but joy and content spring from deeper sources. The others were doubtless happy. Not so Susan. Very often she sighed profoundly; in anxious anticipation her heart throbbed at any noise purporting to give sign of an arrival.

So here in the kitchen were Maria and Betsy, Tildy

and Sue, Walt, Sax, Ford and Sam, and little Ned. Pa and ma to keep "order," all in an interesting chat and flutter incident to the close of the meal, last scraps of conversation, pipes for pa and Lem, not for the "boys," who despised the weed, as they had decided that it lessened their "staying power" in exercises, such as boxing, which required strength, activity and reserve power to endure.

Tise had brought in the milk and stood by the stove warming his hands. A ridiculous object, that Tise, on his head *such* a fur cap, a rope tied tightly about his waist serving for the articles of dress named by uncle Amos as "gallooses," and at the same time to hold in place his double-breasted old brown coat guiltless of either buttons or buttonholes of any good to confine a coat so broad to a figure so lank. There was a certain paleness on his hollow cheeks above his short wool-like beard, and the nose above his long black moustache even yet was red from his Thanksgiving libations. Gottlieb felt that Sammy's eye was upon him, and with many a chuckle, and with his left arm close at his side after the trussed fowl model, did the grinning youth draw near the stove. But at each attempt to gain his desired position was he forced to sidle off in the opposite direction; Sam, out of pure mischief, being the barrier. No nearer than a radius of four feet did he get to the rapidly cooling range. With eyebrows raised to absurd curves Sam was the further cause of convulsive te-he-ing from the boy. How slight were the obstacles, then, which from moment to moment delayed a catastrophe the mind

dreads to picture even in this chief epoch of like senseless results of trifling and folly.

"I am glad, Gottlieb," said Betsy, "to see that, for once, you have kept on your coat. Now, Sam, if he's cold, why don't you let him come to the stove and get warm?"

Sam winked at Gottlieb with his right eye, but, brother-like, he exerted himself to occupy as much space as possible, going to the extent of drawing up a superfluous chair to accommodate his long legs.

Gottlieb said, ducking his head with its bushy white hair, "Ach, no. I haf no colt. I yoost shtay in a leetle vhile," which information he confirmed by finding a low seat in the north-east corner of the room, by an outside door, still grinning back at Sam and never moving the arm so close to his side.

Very soon all in the large kitchen were engaged in their own affairs. It was a chance for Gottlieb to take a bit of comfort in his. By slow degrees he drew from beneath his old black frock coat a gray, candle-shaped toy, in length about eighteen inches. With closest affection he attentively examined it on all sides; tossed it up a few inches above his head, as a boy with a ruler, and when it described a fine curve in the air caught it with a grasp between his two clumsy hands.

If it had dropped to the floor!

He looked at Sam, whose face was now very bright, being in the midst of telling a story to Lemuel, who shortly before had come in from a walk to the spring after a pail of fresh water for Aunt Amos, and who now was smoking with the old gentleman.

Gottlieb, glad to be unobserved, now scribbled a few words on his toy, merely his own name and Sam's, in German, his knowledge of writing being of the slightest.

Susan was talking with Tildy, for her mother had said, "No, child; never mind about helpin' with the work, in that dress. Me an' the girls 'll git it done in less than no time. You look kind o' peeked, too. I do believe that is the prettiest dress you hev ever had."

Maria came toward Gottlieb with a pan of milk in both hands.

In a quick jerk the boy hid what was in *his* hands under his coat, and picking up a stick began to whittle. All this time Amos Early and his wife were in an anxiety so illy kept from the rest that Betsy said to her sisters and Tildy, likewise observant, "Girls, do see 'em." It's a surprise party 's sure as you live."

"See how they fairly hover by that door," said Sue.

Ford now was talking to the boys. "Camping," said he to the group about Sam. "Why, I'll tell you of the laziest and jolliest company of campers that ever went back to nature in an army tent and a hammock."

There was an interruption. It was not from Gottlieb. Outside the door on the stoop was heard a noise as if some person were quietly knocking the hard snow from a substantial overshoe.

Amos forgot his stiff knee: he rose to open the door with surprising agility. There was no call for his exertion, for with a very soft tap, as from the muffled paw of a bear, the knob was turned with no delay and the opening of the door was followed by the entrance of a

figure, a man, in width exceeding height, if far from brief as to stature. A close cap, hidden by the wide collar of a buffalo skin fashioned into a coat reaching to within a few inches of the floor; beneath this outer wrap a great-coat, and one would conclude a tailor's shop full of clothes beside.

A muffled voice said some undistinguishable words, while the shaggy arms tugged away at comforter and hat and unbuttoned the buffalo coat.

"Glad to see ye," said Amos, putting out his hand to do the honors of his house. "Wife, this is Peter Heinze. Mr. Heinze, Miss Early; you know Peter, don't you?"

"Well, I've heerd on 'im, an' I'm glad t' see y', Mr. Heinze."

Peter deposited his fur cap and huge neck-scarf in the nearest chair, then was free to shake hands in homely good will with all present.

"Well," said Amos, too anxious to bide the time of Peter for news, "Well, it's a cold night. I didn't think you would get up here."

Peter put back into his pocket the red handkerchief he had brought out to remove the ice from his mustache, and by means of which he had elicited a sound as a trumpet-blast from his "nose like a cherry."

"Y-a-a-s, dot ish zo," said he; "aber," and with infinite exertion he took a yellow envelope from the inner recess of a long pocket-book, far back in some remote crypt of a coat a thousand miles out of sight.

"Y-a-a-s, here ish dot. Dot Herr Gippon, he haf got dot post-office. To-morrow must he go dere unt pegin."

A brief telegram, to be followed by mail matter, explained it all. Amos grasped the thin paper in his veined hand.

Peter's round face beamed with satisfaction, honest and true, of a good deed brought to a successful issue, and an undertone of political joy that now Amos and *his* influence would not be against his re-election to the House when the momentous time should again come to prove how history repeats herself.

"What's up?" demanded Ford, coming over, while yet his father, by aid of his spectacles—at last in place—was trying to connect some meaning with the scrawl he was holding up to the lamp to get the best light.

"Let *me* see, Amos," said his wife. Instinctively, as one used to obey, he lowered his hand, and the two old heads were bent over the dispatch from Washington.

"Oh, what is it?" cried the girls, one and all, gathering around, glad to be talking and noisy in a great hubbub.

"What is it, Peter?" said Sax, shaking hands as a last one on the scene.

"Dot Lemuel Gippon, he iss for bost-master. See?"

Peter smiled like a picture of good-nature.

"What's that?" said Ford. "Is Lem in place of the other one?"

"Dot iss it; ve haf heart. I pring him ofer." He looked sharply at the clear cut face of the man he had so willingly assisted to a position—a paradise to what had been.

"Hallo, Lem!" exclaimed Sam jumping up, "They've got you in as post-master; what do you think of that?"

The man sitting by himself at the other side of the table laid down the evening paper. A stare, incredulous, as one who vaguely strives to grasp a new idea.

"It's true," said Amos, with a joy he was never so world-worn as to hide, "tell your boss good-bye, for you've got to come out here and live." Lemuel rose to make some sort of an advance upon Peter.

"Woll den," said Peter, "I am ferry glad to see you for bost-master."

"This is the good man who had them put you in," said Aunt Early. "Come, Lemuel, and say your best speech to him, and that you'll be glad to be it."

The "best speech" of poor Lem was a cordial shaking of hands with the smiling, gesticulating German.

"Think of it, Tildy," said Maria, "you can hire that cottage of — why, it's yours, Mr. Heinze, sure enough. You'll let 'em have it, won't you? How lovely it *will* be."

" Y-a-a-s," said Peter, shaking like a jelly, with a resounding ha, ha, the effervescence of his sympathy in the delight of the girls, heightened by an understanding of what his own early days had experienced in the line of pinched faces and thread-bare clothes. Peter hastened to add, "Dot leetle house is joost for you: aber first vill I haf him painted, unt make him all good — oh, dot ish von nice varm leetle house. I haf him built for mine selluf: oh, ja, ja."

While this brief little scene, with its brief talk and its ready laughter, was going on, riveting the attention of every one present, including that of the well-

pleased Tise, sitting behind the stove, on the boot-bench, Gottlieb had listened, and used his eyes until the excitement of it all was, after his stupid manner, comprehended. Now as they were talking he said to himself, let him slip along by the wall; so he did. He drew nearer and nearer the cook-stove. It would be the only chance to carry out his joke.

By the same wonderful Power that had kept them until that moment, the fire was dull. This did the boy discover with disgust, still beneath the white ash was a faint spark. How faint; how terrible! Even so — it might be — would it be enough, wondered Gottlieb, with the weapon of destruction in his right hand. With the left he made wide open the amplest space by lifting off a stove lid.

He saw that the fuse was as long again as it should have been, still, perhaps it would ignite in that dead fire, and he looked about to see if he could now, unobserved, push it along in under the cover.

Lemuel made an effort to realize his good fortune.

At a flash of thought the long, long dingy road to his old desk was again his last waking sigh; he heard the harsh, nasal voice of Mr. Teller urge him on to extra work. Then, at the next instant, he remembered the country air, delicious air laden with the fragrance of wild rose and sweet clover. How long, oh, how long! Lemuel dared not speak. Should he show his weakness before these noble friends?

Very white, he stepped around Peter to be at the door. He would rush out into the night. His hand was on the latch, but before he had moved the door it

was flung back into his face. There was a new actor; it was Gabriel Strong, looking like a dead man, blind to the astonishment he caused.

One glance commanding the room and all therein, detected Gottlieb bending over the stove.

One bound, a shout: "Stand back from the door!" a fizzing flash as he had seized what the boy was near to drop in confusion, a something flung, hissing, far into the black night to fall over the brow of the hill; then a concussion.

The house vibrated as a man-of war when a broadside has left its quivering timbers and sped on its errand of wrath.

There was crack and splinter of breaking glass, followed by oppressive silence.

To the astounded company the sight of Gabriel and a glimpse at what he had so marvelously accomplished, at the danger of his own life, explained all. Thoroughly familiar to them were the various modes of blasting. They saw what had been Gottlieb's intention, and what Gabriel Strong — now exhausted, and fallen into Uncle Amos' chair, — had known as by instinct when in the twilight gloom of his powder-house.

With one accord, in consternation they cried:

"A Dynamite Cartridge!"

Each one present came to feel the full force of their danger; the momentary silence was one of dread and terror.

Gottlieb alone was free from these emotions. What he felt was a shame-facedness that his "joke" had been

discovered, mingled therewith keen disappointment that it had fallen through.

With a senseless grin he sheepishly stared from Ford to Sam, then ducked his head.

"W-a-a-l, by gum!" said Sax.

"W-a-a-l, I swow!" gasped Sam.

Long before this had Peter Heinze had to do with Gottlieb; he knew him.

Peter stood transfixed, with uplifted hands and lower jaw dropped on his breast. All the effects of a most sudden and complete scare were united with amazement. Gradually his amazement gave way to one of the violent fits of anger not unusual with him. His round, fat face grew as white as such a face could well be. He strode over to the boy and, seizing him by the coat-collar, shook him roughly, as at the same time he ejaculated,—

"You *tam* LEETLE FOOL!"

Poor Gottlieb, now in dread of what the Iron Duke would have called a "thrashing," began to cry aloud in a sonorous tone.

"Look out, Peter," said Sam the irrepressible, "he may have another."

Peter fell back.

From the focus of his bent arm about his face, Gott lieb said in a broken voice:

"Dot mak notting oudt. Zo it is mit dose bombs effry tay in te qvuarry."

With a noisy show of hurt feelings, the boy sat down by Tise, who had sprung from his seat in horror, and stood scowling at him savagely, and said, in language

interspersed with his own peculiar words of euphony, "If you ever bring any of those —— things round this house again, I'll break your neck; now you mind!"

Gottlieb was meek and snuffled dolefully.

Peter standing back as if he had no mind to risk another "bomb," but in full rage, must give vent to it on general principles of volcanic eruption.

"I tell you von ting," said he, to the running accompaniment of a smothered sobbing from Gottlieb, often increasing to a dismal howl, "ve tont vant sooch tings as dose in dees countdry. Vhat ish dot vhen any pody can cet sooch tings. Py himmel! Vhen I co to Vashington, I puts a pill in dot house zo vhen beobles make dot dynamite it is for no good. Ve put sooch a man in brison, in chail, vhat you call 'im?"

"Any man," said Lemuel, now diverted effectually from himself, "any man who will manufacture stuff like that is first cause of all the villainy it may work. and he ought to be punished accordingly. Even in war we don't want it. It's no more a part of civilized warfare than it is to turn loose on an enemy a herd of savages, or to burn and torture our captives. It's a cause for death penalty, if any crime is in the list, to make or have in property such a devilish compound."

With one consent the pale and frightened family upheld the views of their spokesmen in regard to Dynamite and all connected with an agent so deadly. To be sure, Susan was less demonstrative in her words and acts to the company at large, for every thought of her heart, now that the danger was at an end, was centered

upon Gabriel. If, in the inaudible utterances between them, more than one osculatory proof of their sincerity was given and received, it was an obvious inference that all was peace between them, and that having known the woes of strife, they never would quarrel again.

CHAPTER XV.

PETER HEINZE.

"CONFOUND that boy," said Amos, "he has made a pretty rumpus. Gottlieb, dry up! Stop that noise." Amos turned his back to the stove and said to Peter, "Come, Peter, take off your coat and spend the evening with us."

"Yes, yes," cried all. "Do stay, you must stay."

"And I'll have some hot coffee in five minutes," said Betsy. "Ugh! how cold it is." "I'll fix the fire," said Walt. "It iss colt," said Peter taking off his coats with no further ceremony. "Get vonce some qvuilts unt I hellup to nail him on te vindows." So Walt made a new fire and some of Aunt Early's reserve stock of quilts went to keep out the cold from the broken windows.

In a short time, however, all had adjourned to the parlor which was snug and warm in its usual good order, all save Betsy and her mother, the one taking down the china and the other waiting for the kettle to boil.

Tise said *he* was agoin' to bed, and so withdrew, very cross.

"Don't you know," said Aunt Early to Gottlieb, as he

still sat on his bench behind the stove, "that it was awful bad for you to put that thing in the stove? You did n't want to blow us all up, did you? Think of this nice stove being broken all in little pieces and us being killed!"

Gottlieb now shed tears of honest regret as he thought of his "joke" in this light.

"You won't do it again, will you?" continued she.

"Ach, nein, nimmer, nimmer, ach Gott! nein!" said the boy earnestly.

"Now you had better go to bed, for it's time. Here's a nice piece of cake for you."

Into the willing grasp of the boy was deposited a broad slab of cake as white as the gold-rimmed plate whereon the loaf reposed, and it lasted him all the way up-stairs and until his head was on its pillow, when he instantly fell asleep.

In the parlor all were at ease; music was the order of the hour.

Gabriel schooled himself to be resigned when Sue, looking so beautiful he could not "take his eyes off of her," as Sam whispered in sarcasm to Walt, — when Sue, as described, sang "When the stars shine."

Peter Heinze only winced three or four times during its progress.

"It's your turn now," said Ford to Peter, who loved music, and went over to the piano with good-natured unconcern.

To open his part of the concert he struck the keys with a practised touch, before, with absolute perfection; he began the prelude, and followed it by the whole of

that stock piece of every German tenor, "Adelaide," perhaps the most beautiful of all the great arias. How the man did sing; with what of pure tone; how the pathos of that superb song thrilled his hearers, albeit not a line of the words could they understand.

With what simplicity and abandon he threw himself into the music.

Alas! for English and American self-consciousness, that in time past, as it bids fair to do in time to come, has closed to them the way to true art.

Followed "Adelaide" one of the sonatas of Beethoven worthy its place on the programme. Never had Sue heard anything like it.

In the recess of the bay window her hand sought Gabriel's. When from Liszt and Chopin one selection followed another, they one and all gathered about the piano declaring enthusiastically that it was all too splendid for that little home group.

Sue was completely carried away. "Oh, Mr. Heinze," cried she in a simple frankness that went to a simple nature for just what it was worth and never hurt, "Oh, Mr. Heinze," she said, "that is grand, it is glorious. How can people devote their souls to trash instead of real music. It's a shame for you to keep that dark, old smoky saloon when you can sing just like an angel!"

Peter swung around on the stool to face the two young people who stood behind him.

"So it iss," said Peter, "I haf no lofe for dot peesness abervhat shall I to mit mein singing? Dot saloon gifs mooch geld for mein frau unt mein six kinder. Ich must dot geld haf, eh?"

Peter shrugged his shoulders. That was all true; besides Peter rather enjoyed his beer on its own account — the effect of "dot peesness."

His knowledge of German literature was deep, if not to say complete, and in a general education he could have compared favorably with the best scholars. It is probably a fact that solid hard work every day would have been less to his taste and his phlegmatic nature than "dot peesness."

Going to Washington was exactly to his mind; after that night Amos and his family were all his firm constituents.

Aside from Peter and his vice of indolence, and his countless virtues, there was too much truth in the remark, and Lemuel felt called upon to add to Peter's confession.

"It's a state of society," said he, "altogether false to nature and savoring too much of anarchy by far, to be studied with the least encouragement. Beauty delves in the shops, humming-birds and nightingales plod along in the muck and mire, while moles and hedgehogs, ill at ease, are burdened with a weight of gold they don't know how to use. A strange world, my masters."

Several of the listeners said that was so, and Peter nodded his head and raised his shoulders to his ears in a most expressive shrug, while Betsy came in with a pile of plates and napkins.

CONCLUSION.

LEMUEL GIBBON, the very next morning, with no formality, took his place as post-master.

A letter to his late employers brought an angry reply, that from him they had not received fair treatment; if they lost by his unceremonious resignation he must make it good to them. To leave in that off-hand way after *they* had stood by him all these years!

Lemuel's lip curled in scorn. This from Teller, Stoltz & Co., was in point of business; in point of fact, while Lemuel's vacation was a week from its close, out of fifty who were after his old place, the firm selected a youth from the writing-school, who deemed himself one of the most fortunate of young men, thus to have been run off into a cast-iron mould, where he might stick as a piece of furniture to the end of his days, working for a pittance in a state of slow but sure mental and moral starvation.

Peter was as good as his word. He had the house he had built for himself painted and restored to a picture of solid comfort.

Tildy could never have found words to describe the joy of it; so Lemuel; so little Ned.

A trim housemaid, sure-footed and strong, took the load of cares, great and small, in their wear and tear, from the shoulders so illy fitted for a burden many miserable years had made a necessity, and Tildy for for the first time was free from anxious thought as to the ways and means of surmounting her hill of difficulty.

Not one of the capable ones of the earth, not one with a strength of will to rise superior to it all, she accepted her new state in life with a spirit of devout thankfulness.

Lem said it was his greatest comfort to see her growing so young and pretty day by day. The people found that in him they had a treasure, and hoped it would be a long time before his place was filled by another.

Lemuel agreed to that, but he had discovered new openings in case he should be supplanted by some political favorite. Congress might grant that new pension bill, and the farm bill. With such aids he could keep poverty from the door. Again: in the new universities springing up in every section of the West, would not his education stand as good a chance for a professorship as another man's education?

He hoped so.

Yes, truly, there was "land at last" for the storm-tossed wanderer.

As for Gabriel and Sue, the very next Saturday evening Gabriel Strong came after her to go to choir meeting.

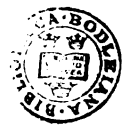
"They've asked me to lead the singing," said he, "shall I?"

"Do it by all means," said Sue blithely. They were riding along and the "stars were shining."

"Oh, Gabriel," said she, "you don't know how I have come to detest all my poor trash of music. I'm going to begin at the beginning and see what I can do with what talent I have, and then do it as well as I can, with all my heart and soul."

"Sweet Sue," said her beloved one, "I was trying to get at that all the time."

THE END.


BODLEIANA

Time limit?

(1) night

*539

sight unseen?